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## ABOUT THIS BOOK

The author of this book has had a long and varied career as a journalist in India. As a correspondent he accompanied the famous Younghusband Mission to Tibet which penetrated to Lhasa: he was in the Boxer Rising; he fought in Mesopotamia; and he was engaged in several campaigns on the North-West Frontier.

This book is that of a story-teller who is also a man of action. A lifetime in India has led him to many strange places where his knowledge of the language and the people has enabled him to gather much out-of-the-way knowledge, and to hear stories that few other men could learn.

In reminiscent vein a story-teller's pack is unfolded; customs and superstitions, primitive tribes and their ways, strolling singers, mysterious caves, tales of ghosts and tombs, sidelights on past durbars . . . these are among the wares held up for our entertainment and inspection.

Something of the glamour, the unexpectedness and the inwardness of the vast spread of India can be seen in this delightful account of a lifetime's observation.

# INDIAN PEEPSHOW

BY

HENRY NEWMAN

LONDON

G. BELL AND SONS LTD

1937

*Printed in Great Britain by The Camelot Press Limited  
London and Southampton*

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## CONCERNING THE WRITER

In the spring of 1893 I was seated in the office of the *Civil and Military Gazette* at Lahore. I was, in fact, occupying the very seat that Kipling had once sat upon. I did not know when I was engaged to occupy that seat how great a man had been there before me. The world then had widely begun to honour him. But in the office of the newspaper there had never been any doubt as to his talents. They talked a great deal about him, saying how certain they were that in the future he was likely to become one of the greatest of contemporary English writers.

Although I had never worked with him, I soon caught the enthusiasm of my colleagues, and I think it was due to Kipling more than to anyone else that I ceased from making writing my primary occupation; for, instead of keeping to my desk, I was always away from it, attempting to solve the mysteries of Indian life. I walked about the bazars. Presently I got into the habit of taking the train and wandering as far as possible in a daily trip into the country. I

would, at week ends, visit such places as Attock and Peshawar. Sometimes I would go south down towards Meerut and Umbala. On days when I could not take a train and had the leisure, I read books about India.

One day the editor said to me: 'Unless you stick more to your desk and learn how to sub-edit and write leading articles, you will never come to anything.' He was probably right, for I never stuck to my desk, could never sub-edit and my leading articles were painful and dull. So I never came to anything. I do not know whether it is quite right to blame Kipling for that; in fact I do not blame him, because I am rather pleased than otherwise that I did not stick to sub-editing. But there was one activity connected with journalism that I really did enjoy. I had not been engaged as a reporter, but I was always willing to report, because the work led me into places which it would not have been possible for a man engaged at his desk to visit. In fact, I was so keen on reporting that presently, not only on this paper, but on other papers that I was associated with in Calcutta, I was sent out regularly on missions of the kind that are called 'special' in Fleet Street; and some of them were indeed of a fine, wild, adventurous kind. I went to China for the Boxer Rebellion; I went to Lhasa with Younghusband, and I was present as a correspondent on several



Frontier expeditions. My office did not try to hold me when the Great War began, and welcomed me back when the war was over. But even that tumultuous experience could not stay me for long. When the Anir made his amazing attempt to invade India in 1921 I was there to report progress. Very little was the progress he made. But war, after all, even when it fascinates you, is hardly the whole life of a man. Most of my years were spent like the years of most men in peace; but as indicated, it was a peace mixed with unceasing travel, even if the travel were only a few miles outside a city.

Sometimes instead of wandering about in bazars, I would collect a few coolies and wander into the jungle after game, big and small. In those early days there was no Arms Act, so far as Europeans were concerned, and few people were interested in what a solitary camper was doing. Or rather few officials were interested, for naturally, the peasantry paid keen attention to the solitary sahib who said he was not an official sahib, but who was quite willing to talk to them about their crops and listen to their legends. Occasionally, I got quite a long leave, two and three months at a time, and these I always spent in the jungle somewhere, again without having to ask leave from this or that person before I could pitch a camp or fire a shot at a sambar. Most of the shooting was done in the hills, and I think the most

lovely periods of my life were spent in the Himalayan forests. I was never able to do much shooting at the higher altitudes, for the question of expense bulked large and I had to make the most of whatever money I had. It was all very well to go out with a single-fly tent, into jungles in India proper, and to have no more than a following of two or three men. But when you get into real cold, you must be well provided for, with plenty of provisions and adequate tents and equipment.

On the plains of India the followers sleep in the open. In the high hills they must have shelter provided, and they are no longer able to pick up a living anyhow, buying their stuff from villagers here and there. I remember one expedition I attempted to make over the Niti pass. We were out of food for two days, and my servants blamed me for want of foresight, though I think (and I said) that it was due to want of foresight on their part. On another occasion, I was out with two Frenchmen who had conceived an idea of finding a way into forbidden parts of Tibet. They knew nothing about organising an expedition of that kind, and we had the greatest trouble both for want of shelter and want of food. All our coolies deserted, and I do not know how it was that any of us got back. But that makes a great story by itself, and I do not intend to enlarge on it in this book; this book is to

be about India only and not about regions outside of it.

To return to the excursions I used to make far from the chair on which I should have been sitting to enter the bazars and wild places. After a time, I became conscious of a new kind of India, an India that lived and throbbed quite outside the experience of the European residents. This was an India not quite of the kind that Edwin Arnold wrote about, the India which bowed its head in patient deep disdain and heard the legions thunder past. The India I mean lived an active and vigorous life of its own, very deeply aware of the life that throbbed through the whole continent. When a pundit says that the rivers of India are an actual part of the life of India, he means something that is rather difficult for the average European to understand; but I have always felt that there is a very subtle connection between the physical feature of the country and the people in it. The pundits say that if the Ganges were interrupted in its flow anywhere, all life in Hindustan would cease. There are similar legends or sayings about the Himalayas; one declares that should Kanchenjanga ever be ripped open by an earthquake or a gigantic landslide, there would issue from it such streams of poison as would kill everybody in the land.

You must know that in India, as in some other

parts of the world, there is a legend of a great snake that lives underground. The cavern is located in different parts of India, but the story is always the same. Man is warned not to dig too deeply, lest he digs into the cavern and that monster emerge. The legend has not in other parts of the world interfered with mining activities; but it has in India, and it was not till the British, with their want of imagination, and their practical mind, came along, that any attempt was made to develop the mineral resources of the country. Even to-day, there are minor rajahs and zemindars who refuse to allow any prospecting in the land they own.

The attitude engendered by this feeling of oneness with the land and its rivers explains the reluctance of very many Indians to develop any property they have. They dislike canals and railways for this reason. Engineers, they say, are always cutting up the Mother. Once I heard an Indian objecting very strongly to a party of sepoys who were range-finding across a valley. 'This is our Mother,' he said, 'and you are measuring distances upon her.' The sepoys, instead of telling him to be off, looked very abashed – but they did not cease from range-finding.

Once you appreciate the feeling that Indians have for the mother-land, which to them, is the very earth

itself, you will understand in some sort the nature of the current that flows through their lives. They are a deeply religious people; but you must not make the mistake of thinking that their religion is concerned with image worship. That is the sort of thing they leave to the children and the uneducated women. I remember once saying to a Marwari: 'Why have you made a hundred thousand gods and goddesses?' He replied: 'Why have you made one?' and, being ashamed, I remained silent. The fact is, that the outward forms of worship – I am talking of course of Hindus only – mean very little to the mass of the people. Many of the ceremonies are merely occasions for a holiday; and other ceremonies have come down from remote times and are kept alive as a matter of form and because they add a diversity to life. It is because form means so little to Indians that there is so much difficulty in converting them to Christianity. It is true that in some parts whole tribes have changed their religion, but the bulk of these tribes do not belong to the caste system of Hinduism.

As for the Mussalmans, I think it should be made clear that they are conscious not so much of their Mother country, as of the great brotherhood of Islam. They have a saying: 'Sab Islam hai bhai,' which means that all Islam is a brotherhood; and you will certainly find that those in India who

profess this great and virile religion accept as brothers any Mussalmans whatever their race or country of origin. Islam cuts across barriers of race, and those provided by geographical differences; you will find Mussalmans of very different status and from different countries embrace each other fraternally on all kinds of occasions. I have never seen people professing other religions of love and brotherhood behave in this way: a man in dress clothes does not elsewhere embrace a man in rags. Amongst Mussalmans the thing would excite no comment at all.

Here, then, are the two great communities of India, each living a tremendous sub-conscious life of its own, and, at bottom, very different from that of the English in the country. It is true the Hindus have a feeling that Mother Earth has been cut up and disfigured by British engineers and British activities generally; but the soreness so created does not go very deep. Mother Earth, after all, is so mighty, so all-powerful, that anything that might be done to her by picks and shovels, and even by dynamite, can only be a small thing.

When I had realised the facts which I have mentioned above, my interest in and understanding of things in India grew deeper. I was more fascinated than ever, and I was still less inclined to sit at my desk. It happened that finally an understanding

editor of a newspaper gave me the liberty to leave the office whenever I liked, provided I had finished a certain column that was allotted to me daily. This enabled me to get away after lunch and not return, but I did not spend the leisure so gained at golf or tennis. I wandered into the city on foot even at the height of the hot weather and observed things in the streets and talked to people in the bazar. The small shopkeepers only do business during certain rush hours; at other times they sit idle and are only too pleased to exchange remarks with the strangers. Many, after they had become aware that I knew something about their modes of life, and emotions, and activities, were very pleased indeed to tell me more, and to relate anecdotes. Most of these were old stories culled from old books. Some I was able to cap with others; and when this happened a shopkeeper would often laugh so much that he almost fell over backwards. These people were always very pressing in their invitations to me to come again. Sometimes they had parties at which thirty or forty people were present, all telling anecdotes, all quizzing each other. By the way, this quizzing habit is very common in India, and those who are good at it are great favourites. For instance, some aged man will enter the room clad in most splendid garments. Immediately there is a shout, 'Here is the bridegroom.' Then they say,

'Where is the bride?' Then they would say, 'The bride has not come because her mother says the groom is too young.' And then there were redoubled screams of laughter.

Life in India flows on very richly, and is, in many ways, more stately and dignified than life in other parts of the world. I know people say, often because they have heard someone else say it before, that life in India is difficult and hard, because the people have no money and have to toil severely all day long. But it is wrong to think of India as composed of multitudes of dull, toiling masses who have no interest in life and are merely exploited by capitalists. I do not think the people of India are exploited at all: they live their own lives, and those lives are not more toilsome than the lives of people in any other country given over to agriculture. There are seasons when a certain number of farmers and their paid helpers have to labour very hard, particularly in rice-growing land. For there can be no harder task in the whole world than that of transplanting rice: it is only in India and other Eastern lands that people would have the patience to do it. Indians are patient under all kinds of misfortunes and calamities, and when it comes to transplanting rice they are also patient. But not dumb. Would you hear in any shopping centre in England the multitudes of voices that you hear



in the bazar? Indians are great talkers, and if, sometimes, you see a group of men sitting round the fire, all silent and glum, the fact is not that they are really glum, but that they have talked so much already that morning; there is nothing more to say till something new happens. I have sat round camp fires with shikaris and followers and, even though an early start was necessary next morning, it was hard to induce them to cease conversing. And when a camp is pitched near a village, or one resides not far from the poorer quarters in a town, one hears a continual hum of conversation all day long. More than that, one hears laughter, and if laughter is not an expression of satisfaction, I do not know what is. Some writers speak of the acrid laughter of the East, but it is not acrid to my ears. Of course the East laughs, like other parts of the world, at the misfortunes of neighbours. But such misfortunes do not occur all the time, whereas in the East there is frequent laughter. Sometimes during a royal and viceregal procession the multitudes lining the route are very silent, but this I put down to the fact that where very great persons are concerned the East has an idea that it is lucky to gaze upon the royal presence and say not a word. Recently, the habit of cheering is becoming, if not common, at least not unusual, and I have no doubt that when the King and Queen come to announce their assumption of the title of

Emperor and Empress of India, great shouts of welcome will be heard.

But I am wandering from my desk again. There came a day when contents of that daily column I had to produce for a newspaper was more or less left to my discretion, I could say what I liked and no one interfered with it; so presently I began to say things about what I had seen or heard during my shuttle-like life in careering up and down India. The things I wrote had no relation to the news, nor were they comments on public affairs. They related little out-of-the-way incidents and mentioned old and forgotten things. Presently, I became aware of a new and powerful source of information that I had tapped. People of every kind and caste in India, ranging from governors to students in secondary schools, began to write to me on topics I had mentioned.

The stream in the end became so large that my little rivulet of information presently became merged in it. That column which I was supposed to produce presently began to write itself, that is to say, it was no longer necessary for me to look for topics. For the last four or five years, it is only now and then that I have been able to write on a subject of which I myself have thought. It would seem that there is a public in India which has interests quite outside the usual newspaper topics, and

the trouble now is not to direct the thoughts of readers into channels out of the ordinary, but to see that the readers do not overwhelm me with their ideas and expressions of opinion on the very lines that I would have followed myself. It is no longer necessary for me to enlarge in my column on the richness and variety of the Indian scene. My correspondents produce the riches themselves and the most I do sometimes is to rub the colours into a glow. I have said all this because it is necessary for me to express my thanks to the *Statesman* for permitting me to use here various incidents and stories that have appeared in its columns over my signature, and to acknowledge the assistance I have received from literally hundreds of people in compiling that daily column of which I have spoken and from which I intend to draw largely for the purpose of this book. Some of those who have contributed are, as I have said, men in high places; many are officials; many are planters; many are soldiers. There are a few sailors and a large number of Indians from every part of India. The last have helped me most in arriving at that general conclusion about Indian life of which I have already spoken.

An aged Bengali, who would in previous years have certainly been styled a 'muni' (or saint), owing to his long beard and general expression of peace

and sagacity, told me once that average men, including all foreigners (amongst whom he included the English) were individualists. That is why they were never likely to reach great heights in the regions of philosophy. Hindus, he said, were certainly conscious of all other Hindus, and arranged their lives as part of a social organism and not as individuals. Still, they were no more than second-rate individuals. The first-rate man should be conscious, he said, of all humanity, that is to say, of everybody in the world, and arrange his life accordingly. Beyond the first-class person was the master mind, a mind which would be conscious not only of all humanity but of all things past and present and future: the world this mind would see would be the whole world and every possible kind of activity of man and beast and insect in it. In fact, the master mind absorbed everything and knew everything, and more than that it could be aware of everything in a single flash. Of course this last idea is not new to people who know anything of the Hindu religion, but I think something else the sage said is not known to most persons. He said that this single illuminating flash, in which everything that had ever happened or existed was revealed to the mind, could be described in a single word of one syllable. That tremendous word is 'OM.' The word itself is probably known to very many Europeans as part

of the Tibetan invocation, 'Om mani padmi om.' Literally translated it means: 'Oh, the lily in the lotus, Oh.' It may not be quite correct to translate the terrific 'Om' with 'Oh,' but I can think of nothing else. There is certainly no means in the English language of summing up in a single syllable all the activities of the universe.

## THE DURBARS

Looking back at a lifetime, most of it spent in India, one of the most brilliantly coloured memories is the vision of that great durbar which Lord Curzon held at Delhi to celebrate the assumption of the title of Emperor of India by the late King Edward. The King himself was unable to come out to India, and it was thought at first that this fact would in a large measure destroy the grandeur and attractiveness of the spectacle that Lord Curzon contemplated. As a matter of fact, it did not, because the durbar was on a scale of magnificence which I suppose had never before been witnessed in the world. One need not go into figures to prove this. Everybody who was there admitted that they had never seen, or even contemplated, anything approaching what was placed before their eyes. Real genius did its work. It was a genius which in an amazing fashion brought East and West together. There was barbaric magnificence combined with English restraint; that was the way that Lord Curzon got his effect. One day there would be a review of

troops who marched past in formations that had been employed in Europe for centuries. On the next day there would be a review of retainers representing the retinues of the Indian princes; then there would be a great ball at which people danced to the strains of regimental bands. The next day there would be something purely Indian, and so on.

The durbar opened with an elephant procession. To some that term may just mean a certain number of elephants led down a road. But the procession was much more than that. In Curzon's procession were the ruling princes of India in all their finery. You never see a painted elephant in England; that art of putting colours in gorgeous designs on the hides of elephants is unknown in Europe. I am told that the elephants themselves are very pleased with this ornamenting, and strongly resent the paint being scrubbed off when the ceremony is over. After the decoration, on the back of the elephants are placed great embroidered shawls, not the ordinary cloths of commerce, but shawls taken from the treasure houses of kings. The howdah which carries the riders on the elephant is made of the richest woods, burnished with nails of gold and carrying canopies of the finest silk. Within the howdah, as in a coach, is seated the ruler. On each side of the elephants march men in gorgeous clothing, carrying maces, and spears, old pikes, and

other instruments which are meant to symbolise the rank and dignity of the rider. You are to suppose these elephants following one another, not in ones or twos but in an unending train. I forget how many elephants were brought together for the Delhi Durbar, but it seemed to me that the procession would never end. The Duke of Connaught headed the line on a state elephant. The end of it, I think, was brought up by a Shan chief and his sister, who according to Shan custom was also his wife. This pair excited the greatest curiosity and wonder among the multitudes that lined the route. I think they were the only rulers in the procession who showed no interest of any kind in their surroundings: they looked to the front, impassive and unmoved.

Middle-class Indians often speak of that elephant procession as if it were one of the major events of the century. Long before the durbar was actually held they were talking in India about the great gathering of elephants that were to take part in it. The numbers were magnified naturally, and in due course it was reported that the magnificent Viceroy was determined to assemble at Delhi more elephants than had ever been seen together in the history of the world. There were some who admired the idea, but presently a whisper began to grow that it was presumptuous on the part of the Viceroy to attempt



to outrival the elephant assemblies that had been seen in Vedic days. The next thing was a report, invented by some malicious person and carefully fostered in the bazars, that there would be a great disaster during the durbar. This mischievous rumour was repeated from mouth to mouth; that the elephant procession would be followed by a terrible calamity. If the elephants were panic-stricken or stampeded for one reason or another, multitudes of spectators would be slain. Some princes believed this story, and one or two at the last moment fell ill or made some other excuse for not attending. It was widely said, too, that there were not so many people to view that procession as there might have been.

Some days before the actual procession and the opening of the durbar I went to view the elephant camp. There were many more animals there than I had expected. For, while one or two rulers may have been impressed by the bazar report, the majority of them had brought to Delhi not only the elephants they intended to ride in the procession, but all the elephants in their possession. It was a strange and awesome business walking about amongst those masses of beasts. One elephant is impressive, but think of them in hundreds. But any idea I might have had about the risk of a tremendous stampede or panic was soon removed.

I spoke to many mahouts and they were all agreed that they did not believe a panic was likely. 'Look at the beasts,' they said: 'how happy and contented they are,' and, indeed, it seemed to me that all the elephants were in a distinctly happy mood. It is always possible to notice the twinkle in the eye of elephants when they are contented and pleased, and at the elephant camp there were twinkling eyes everywhere. Evidently the great animals were very satisfied at being in a crowd, and when I left the camp I was convinced that there was nothing in the theory of a possible panic.

But the pessimists were not so convinced. A shopkeeper said to me that the durbar was really an 'elephant durbar,' and, 'who knows,' he added, 'what elephants will do?' This idea of an elephant durbar was very widespread. My own servant had it, and also men employed in building the great camp which had been erected for the purposes of the durbar, and I was told even the peasantry round the city were convinced that the elephants were to dominate all the proceedings.

Two or three days before the actual procession a thing happened which raised some doubts in my mind. There was a rehearsal of the procession and the elephants of all the rulers who were to take part in it were drawn up in a long line in order of precedence outside the railway station. I and one or

two other people from the Press camp were on the opposite side of the road, watching the long line of elephants. Very impressive they looked with their howdahs and most of their trappings. They had not yet been painted, so that bit of colour was missing. As we stood watching, one of my companions drew my attention to an enormous elephant somewhere down the middle of the line. He had his trunk straight out and was swaying gently to and fro. That is the kind of habit many elephants have; I suppose it is a form of exercise. Anyway, this swaying elephant, perhaps because his trunk was straight out, began to excite attention. Presently the elephant on either side of him began to sway also, and in no space of time the whole line of elephants was swaying to and fro. 'I don't like this very much,' one of my companions said, and indeed the sight was alarming. What was going to happen next? You know how quickly any feeling of apprehension or alarm spreads in a crowd. The crowd itself began to move and one felt that even if the elephants did not panic, the crowd of men would; that would mean a great rush which would alarm the elephants. But the crowd hardly knew in which direction to run, because the only place of safety was the railway station and the buildings all round it, and the elephants were in between them and the crowd.

But before the crowd could come to any decision a startling event occurred. It may not appear to have been very startling when read of now in the quiet of some room, but it was startling to us out there in the presence of these huge creatures. The elephant which had started the swaying business began to trumpet. That sound in the kind of silence which common apprehension had already created was like the sound of a charge blown on a bugle.

Then the situation was changed in a moment. The British officer in charge of the procession was present, riding on a small white horse. He galloped this horse up to the trumpeting elephant, and one could see him raise his hand and wave to the mahout to take the animal out of the line and down the road. The man was quick to obey, and he had the elephant out and going down the road almost before one could realise what was happening. Immediately it had got clear of the line, the other elephants stopped swaying. I remember enquiring the name of that officer who had certainly prevented a real disaster and found that it was Buller, a Civil Servant.

Years afterwards I met Buller in charge of a district in Eastern Bengal. I happened to tell this story at a small party given to other Europeans in the station, and one of them told me that, though

Buller had often talked about the 'elephant durbar,' he had never mentioned this incident to any of them. The papers did not make much of it at the time, because no one wanted to emphasise a story which, if it got abroad, might entirely ruin the real procession. I paid another visit to the elephant camp with some other people I had enticed a day or two after the procession was over, and there were the elephants looking as happy as possible. All the mahouts agreed that the creatures had enjoyed themselves thoroughly. The only trouble they said would be when it came to separating the gigantic herds into units when the durbar was over.

I learnt a good deal about elephants, talking to the mahouts. It appears that you cannot name an elephant just as you like: it is the prerogative of the mahout to do that. I asked for a few specimen names and I cannot say that they were particularly striking or original. Elephants were called sometimes Rustum and Lightning and Thunder and similar high-sounding titles, but it seemed to me that nearly every other elephant was a Pearl. Which brings me to the extraordinary legend that certain elephants grow pearls within their skulls. Every now and then you will see advertised in the Indian papers an elephant pearl for a lakh or two lakhs of rupees. This pearl is really no more than an unusual growth of bone, the result of some kind of

disease. It is not a pearl in any sense of the word, but the possession of it is considered lucky, and that is why such high prices are paid for it. I had always believed that the pearl was only found in the skulls of aged elephants that had been a long time in captivity, but I am assured by a forest officer who has such a pearl that it was found in the skull of a young rogue elephant that he had shot. But I could talk about elephants for hours, whereas my intention is to write about the durbar.

The elephant procession was the opening ceremony of the durbar. When it was safely over and nothing had happened, the masses of people in Delhi recovered their self-possession, and everything went just as Lord Curzon desired it. I think there was only one hitch, and that was on the occasion of the great ball to which all the fashion of India had been invited, and which was attended by all the rulers in glittering garments and jewels. All went merrily at the function itself, it was after the ball was over that the hitch occurred. You must know that the people attending the durbar were spread over a very large area; camps were miles apart. The soldiery (and what would any durbar be without a military display?) were in camps seven or eight miles away from the centre, and so officers and their wives had been brought in by train. They were to be taken back to camp by a

train leaving at 3 a.m.; but neither at 3 a.m. nor for some hours later was there any train. Delhi can be very cold in the winter, and officers and their wives had not sufficient wraps to be comfortable in the railway station. I was not in the crowd that waited at the station, but I have heard the most amazing stories of how officers and their wives and daughters, generals and young things just out of school, huddled together for warmth during that cold morning.

It happened that Lord Curzon, for reasons into which we need not go, was not a great favourite with the soldiery at the time, and this mismanagement put the lid on a dislike that had been simmering for some time. One can talk about it now, without feeling that a reference to the incident would be unwise, but in those days a bare mention of the great Delhi ball would excite some remarkable comments from the mouths of soldiers. There had been big manœuvres in the vicinity of Delhi before the durbar, and the troops had worked their way, fighting, towards the Panipat Plain on which they were camping. They were given two days, I think, to refresh and clean themselves before the durbar, and then they were called upon to take their part in the ceremonial displays that had been arranged. The rank and file, by the way, had not busied themselves at all with any kind of grievance against the

Viceroy: it was their job to manœuvre and form a picturesque background whenever necessary, and they were not asked to the ball. When the durbar itself opened, Lord Curzon made a stage entry into the amphitheatre. There was great cheering from every part of the amphitheatre except that reserved for military officers and their wives. There, and there only, was a dead silence. Later on, when the Duke of Connaught made his impressive entrance, the military section went mad. The demonstration was of a most extraordinary kind, aged and retired generals standing up in their seats and waving their handkerchiefs. I think before Lord Curzon had ceased from being Viceroy the impression about him among officers had altered considerably. Those who had thought that Lord Curzon was instrumental in overworking them during the durbar were shortly after faced by a man like Lord Kitchener, who did not believe in soldiers getting any rest at all. One of his schemes for tightening up discipline came to be known as the 'Kitchener Test': Every regiment had to undergo that test every year, and it was a process which tried the men and officers very hard. Marks were given and the regiments low down in the list had extra duties allotted to them. After Lord Kitchener went the test was abolished and the army had peace again.

The march past and review of troops was naturally



a very impressive function, but it was thrown entirely into the shade, from the point of view of those who looked for sensation at the durbar, by at least two of the ceremonies which had been arranged to display the Oriental aspect of India. One was called 'The Review of Retainers.' The Retainers were the irregular troops maintained by ruling princes and chiefs. These irregulars were in Oriental uniforms and their arms belonged to a century that was gone. Many princes showed men clad in armour. There were bodies of spearmen, bowmen, men who carried maces, pikemen and halberdiers. One prince displayed a body of people armed only with what are known in India as scorpions, a terrible instrument with claws. Elephants appeared again, this time elephants in armour, with great shields over their foreheads, and with a stout steel pike sticking out of the middle of the shield, for in old days in India elephants were often employed to break down the gates of forts. To prevent this, gates used to be studded with iron nails, with the points outwards; and in order to overcome this form of defence, the attackers put these shields on the heads and foreheads of the elephants.

Then the most remarkable thing of all. At the Review of Retainers were men with a sword in each hand, mounted on stilts, whose purpose was to fight elephants. But even more dangerous was the

profession of the fighting mahout. He had to sit on the neck of the elephant that was engaged in battle with another. The risk he ran was twofold. The opposite elephant might seize him with its trunk, sweep him off his seat, and trample upon him. Or his own elephant might do the same thing. There is a famous Indian picture of two war elephants engaged in battle. They have met head on, and one of them has been actually raised in the air by the shock. The two mahouts are both shown as having lost their grip, and on the verge of falling off.

The American visitors to the durbar were very pleased with the little silver cannon shown by Baroda and the lovely bullocks that drew them. Some pack bullocks were also shown in a transport train, belonging to a breed that I did not know, they had long sweeping horns and sloping foreheads. They carried themselves with an air of distinction that it is impossible to describe. One almost thought them to be arrogant human beings. 'That is exactly what they are,' said one of the drivers when I was questioning him about his charges. 'These bullocks are Brahmans who have committed a sin. In due course they will become humans again, provided that they do not sin a second time, in which case they will become horses.'

In addition to the motley throngs of retainers in the great amphitheatre there was a march past of

the better-trained troops belonging to the princes, and of various other groups or companies of people reflecting the various activities of India. The State troops were in modern uniforms, but not all the equipment was modern, and as far as can be judged from a march past their training varied a great deal. Some companies went past very stoutly but irregularly, others, particularly those belonging to the Punjab princes, went past like highly trained soldiers. Kashmir, too, showed a great company of very fine soldiers. On the flank of one company there came something like a monster built for a carnival at Nice. What is it? Everybody present stood up in his seat to gape; I thought at first that it was a man on stilts, but later on the shape resolved itself into a real man – the Kashmir Giant. They had been talking about this enormous creature, but most people did not believe in him, and no one thought for a moment that he would be marching on the flank of a company of soldiers. He not only marched, but was carrying over his shoulder a musket as big as a cannon. I forget how large the arena of the amphitheatre was, very large, and the giant was obviously tired before the troops had made the circuit. I suppose there is a record somewhere of the man's height, but all I can say is that he was unbelievably tall. Current report declared that he could not fit by any means into a railway

carriage, much less into any other kind of conveyance. It said further that he had to walk all the way from Srinagar to Delhi, and to walk back again. I had a private interview with him later on, but his dignity did not match his stature, for he put out a hand that looked as large as a tray and uttered that all-pervasive word 'bakshish.' I put a rupee into that hand, and it looked no larger than a threepenny-bit.

But the greatest sensation in that review was provided by the Mutiny Veterans. Lord Curzon had put the whole machinery of the State to work to discover every survivor of the Mutiny still alive in India, at least every survivor who had fought on the English side. The bulk of these survivors, of course, were Punjabis, but there were many old soldiers belonging to other races, and a handful of Europeans. The Punjabis with their long beards and old uniforms were very striking. Many were bent with age, and had to carry sticks to support them on the long march round the arena. Most of the Europeans were not in uniform; they had shed their uniforms many years ago. I remember two lines Kipling wrote when he read the descriptions of that march past of the Mutiny Veterans:

The remnant of that desperate host  
That cleansed the East with steel.

India as a man still living can know it is famous for two durbars; the second one was to announce the assumption by King George V of the title of Emperor of India. The sovereign was present in person, and that fact added greatly to the dignity of the event, for he was the first sovereign to set foot in India while on the throne of England. For some reason, it was decided not to follow any of the precedents set by Lord Curzon. There was to be hardly any mixture of East and West, and the ceremony was almost wholly of a Western character; in fact, but for the presence of Eastern costumes and Eastern peoples and for a big mela (or fair) on the river bed, the durbar might have been held anywhere. In that sense it was a far inferior spectacle to the barbaric splendour of the scene which Lord Curzon had designed and was able to display. At the same time the durbar was associated with a fact of such far-reaching political significance that Curzon's durbar was almost put in the shade.

Some years afterwards when I mentioned this fact of political significance in a London club, some had not heard of it; others had forgotten it. There was a hazy idea that some great political concession had been made to the people of India, but that was all, so that it may be of interest to relate exactly what happened. The durbar was practically over. It had been announced to all the world that King

George V of England was now also Emperor of India. The trumpets and fanfares had all been blown, and people had risen in their seats, because the King was about to descend from the throne. But instead of leaving, His Majesty moved to a second throne in another part of the amphitheatre and it became evident that he was about to make a second announcement. The whole of that tremendous gathering remained hushed and silent. The 'boons' that were to be granted to India had already been announced: these were not great or many, but were of a comforting kind. What was to come now? In the old days of despotic rule a new sovereign sometimes, instead of announcing 'boons,' uttered threats like the Israelite who said that he intended to rule with whips of scorpions. Of course nothing of that kind was expected from the new Emperor of India; still, men waited with bated breath for what was to be announced.

The matter that was to be announced had been kept entirely secret. The members of the Executive Council, the Secretary of State for India and, of course, the King himself, knew what had been settled. Only one non-official had been taken into the confidence of this august party. He was an Indian journalist, a man who was so adept at finding out things that were meant to be known only to a few that it was decided to let him into this secret

also, and to put him on his honour not to divulge it. Was any journalist so greatly tempted? But the secret was not told, and when His Majesty announced what was about to happen, people gasped with amazement at the nature of the concession that the Government of India was now making. Strange to say, Lord Curzon was concerned in this affair also.

Some years before, probably even before the elephant durbar, Lord Curzon, as Viceroy, was perusing some papers dealing with Bengal. One paper particularly caught his eye; it had probably got mixed up with the others by accident. Anyway it was a proposal, circulated by the Government of Bengal among various high people in that province and noted on by the Secretary of State, that Bengal should be divided in two. The proposal originated possibly from a Lieutenant-Governor himself, and was concerned with the fact that the province had become too big for one man to manage. Some of those consulted were for a partition of the province, and others not. What angered and amazed Lord Curzon was the fact that such a proposal should have been made without his knowledge, and that activities connected with putting it into shape were being carried on secretly and behind his back. The Viceroy, I doubt not, expressed his anger in some way or another, but

presently he became absorbed in the papers connected with the suggestion, and finally he became an enthusiastic supporter of the idea that the business of administering the province of Bengal could be carried on more easily if the province were cut in two. Lord Curzon was not a man who worked in secret; what he proposed to do he uttered to the world, and naturally his scheme for creating a second province became known to all Bengal. Immediately there was an outcry. At first numbers of people thought that the outcry was artificial and had no real feeling behind it, but those who have followed what I have said about the Indian idea of the Mother, will understand me when I say that Bengali opinion was really outraged. I do not say that all the highly educated Bengalis who took part in the agitation had any superstition about Mother Earth, but to the bulk of Bengalis this partition of Bengal appeared as a kind of sacrilege in which the Mother herself was being cut in two. Europeans will find it rather hard to understand this attitude, but it was certainly there. Lord Curzon's proposal was to cut off Eastern Bengal from Bengal proper; to add to Eastern Bengal the province of Assam; and thus have a province of Bengal and a province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. I do not know whether the people of Eastern Bengal were more shocked than the people of Western Bengal, but I



made a tour into Eastern Bengal at a time when the agitation against the proposal was at its height, and the depth of feeling which was displayed by the Hindu Bengalis was amazing. On the other hand the Mussalmans in Eastern Bengal were pleased at the thought of having to themselves a province in which they would predominate, for there are more Mussalmans than Hindus in Eastern Bengal. But the bulk of the Mussalmans are poorly educated and are poor in other ways. Although the agitation lasted for many months and was carried on in the most decided way, Lord Curzon, his mind once made up, was not to be deterred. The new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was duly created, a Lieutenant-Governor was appointed, Dacca was made the capital of the new province, and all the necessary administrative machinery devised. Even after the creation of the new province the agitation continued, but at the time when Lord Curzon left the country Bengalis had become accustomed to the idea of the partition.

At the second durbar King George said that, 'acting on the advice of his Ministers,' he now announced that the partition of Bengal had been rescinded and that Bengal was to be her old self again. When this unexpected announcement was made, no sound of any kind came from the vast audience that heard it. But there was more to

come. After allowing his words to sink into the minds of his hearers His Majesty proceeded to say that Calcutta was no longer to be the capital of the Indian Empire. It had been decided to remove the capital to Delhi.

Into the minds of many of those who heard these words there must have come memories of what they had read about other emperors who had moved a capital from one place to another. When that was done in the old days it was not merely a question of moving the heads of the administration, and various ministerial officers. Everybody in the capital had to go. One great city is still standing in India, a great and imperial city without a single inhabitant. Everybody had to go; and, although there is now no law forbidding anybody to live in Fatehpur Sikri, there is nobody there. The city is peopled only by ghosts. There must have been, in the minds of many, grave doubts and hesitation as to what would happen to the great city on the banks of the Hughli. I was not present at that durbar and so I cannot say whether the hush that succeeded the King's second speech lasted for very long. Anyway, it lasted till the King had left the throne and the amphitheatre. Then a perfect babel of sound broke forth, and we must imagine a similar babel of sound following the messages that flashed from the telegraph offices to every part of India. In

Bengal, of course, the excitement was immense. On the whole the rejoicing that followed the news that there was to be no more partition of Mother Bengal was not overshadowed by the other thought that the capital of India was to be removed from Bengal to the Punjab.

Other parts of India might or might not have been indifferent to the partition or otherwise of Bengal, but the removal of the capital to Delhi was to them an astonishing and remarkable decision. I do not know whether at first anybody liked it; the thing savoured too much of the old despotisms in which gigantic decisions were taken without consulting anybody. What might not come next? So there was no genuine chorus of approval of the measures that had been announced. Later on when people became accustomed to the idea there was less opposition to it. It seemed after all that Calcutta would not really suffer in any way, so far as her commerce and industries were concerned. The Government might go, but the jute mills could not be moved; coal would still come to the banks of the Hughli because it was from there that this product could be transported most cheaply to other parts of the world and to the jute mills. There would be no point in attempting to take tea to Delhi; Calcutta would continue to ship tea. In fact, presently Bengal was content to lose her place

as the premier province of India. Calcutta was busy making money. In a few months, interest began to be taken all over India in the plans for the building of the new capital, and even before the war it was rarely that anybody living in Calcutta heard a word against the move to Delhi. Thus, while the removal of the capital from Calcutta was finally considered a matter of no great importance, the decision to make Bengal one province again was long declared to be a sign of the strong common sense and sincerity of the British people. My own idea is that the Government first decided to remove the capital to Delhi and then they determined, as a kind of sop to Bengal, to rescind the partition.

One does not want to be too serious in writing a book of this kind, and that is why I mention what happened after the King had as his final action in Delhi laid the foundation-stone of the New Delhi that was about to be built. Engineers went over the ground, looked at the foundation-stone, and said it was no kind of foundation-stone at all; where had it come from? Nobody knew; and the whisper went abroad that it had been brought in a hurry from the nearest cemetery. I do not know whether that story is true or not, but it is a fact that after condemning the foundation-stone the engineers condemned the site, and in no mild terms. It became obvious that the site selected

could not be used. Another site had to be found, and it is on the second site that the New Delhi of to-day stands. It is a fine and glorious city. I imagine no city in the world has such a stately setting. Some of the palaces in it are designed on a scale almost too vast for ordinary human beings. The building of New Delhi almost came to a stop during the war, when the money was required for other purposes. But when the war was over, the Assembly, which had been very cautious in voting supplies for other purposes, readily agreed to vote the money to carry on the building as rapidly as possible. The imagination of the members had been caught by the size and form of such buildings as were already taking shape. Everybody wanted to see what the new city would look like when completed.

While there have been only two big durbars in India, there was a series of spectacles presented to the Prince of Wales, now the Duke of Windsor, in various parts of India which rivalled in magnificence and grandeur anything that had been shown at the durbar. And yet I remember best a scene which took place when the Prince appeared at a function on the Calcutta Maidan, and was surrounded by an enormous mob. Those were days of trouble and racial strife. It had been said that it was a most dangerous thing to allow the Prince to

visit India at all: there had been riots at Bombay when he landed, and the feeling in Calcutta was even higher than it was in Western India. So when the Prince and his escort were lost in the midst of the multitude many feared some disastrous event. But the multitude were not animated by any racial feeling. They simply wanted to see the Prince and take 'darshan' of him. This word 'darshan' means 'sight,' and that kind of sight which is followed by good luck. In India they take darshan of their own princes, and the greater the prince the greater the good luck.

Mention of the Prince reminds me of a little incident that took place on the Maidan when his father, as Prince of Wales, and the Princess of Wales landed at the river's edge on their visit to Calcutta during their tour of India. It had been announced that their Highnesses did not favour the idea of receiving presents from ruling princes, but the city of Calcutta was permitted to give a present to the Princess of Wales. This present consisted of a rope of pearls. Every ruler in India insisted on presenting one of the pearls. The city of Calcutta bought a few more, with the result that the rope, when complete, probably was the finest rope of pearls in existence. There was a little ceremony, when the present in a highly-decorated case was handed over to the Princess of Wales. The Princess opened the

case expecting, perhaps, to find something lavish; but who could have expected such a magnificent sight? With a little cry of delight she slipped the rope of pearls over her head and allowed it to rest on her shoulders. Nor did she afterwards take it off; an attendant behind her took the case, but the Princess wore the necklace all through the ceremony and during the drive to Government House. Sometimes one reads in the papers of the Queen appearing at this or that function 'wearing a magnificent rope of pearls.' That is the rope presented to her by the city of Calcutta.

Thinking of the forthcoming Coronation Durbar, I am led to recall a certain vivid and gorgeous suggestion made to me by a Talukdar, a suave and courtly gentleman. He was greatly impressed, it appears, by a feature of the Coronation Durbar of George V and Queen Mary. The King and Queen were seated on thrones placed high above all the other seats in the amphitheatre; not only above the crowd of onlookers, but high above all the high and excellent princes and others who were grouped about their Majesties. You know how at any ceremony the most important personages are seated in the middle of a semi-circle of people arranged according to precedent, those on the wings being almost on the same level as the central figures, and the whole group resembling something that might

be arranged by a stage manager. At the Coronation Durbar twenty-five years ago, the stage manager was an officer of the Indian Civil Service who was unhampered by any stage traditions. He thought the King and Queen should be placed on high, and placed on high they were.

This imaginative Talukdar said that when he saw their Majesties raised on high he felt rushing through him a wave of loyalty and devotion impossible to describe. He was indeed 'taking darshan' of the King and Queen. In India the mere sight of a royal person is supposed to be lucky, and the more exalted he is the luckier it is to see him. We are told that in the old days in India persons of high degree took advantage of this belief to extract from every person who looked at them, when they went abroad, at least one rupee. The Talukdar, in 'taking darshan' of the King and Queen, was, so to speak, basking in the rays of good luck and prosperity which their presence induced. And, being raised on high, their Majesties were seen by everybody in that vast assemblage. They brought good luck to everybody, and probably raised in every heart the same emotions that were felt by the Talukdar.

'At one and the same time,' said he, 'the King and Queen were enthroned both in the amphitheatre and in the hearts of those present. Now,' he continued, 'let me tell you of an idea I have for a



future durbar, which would show in a practical manner the position which the Emperor of India should hold in the minds of Indians.' The Talukdar then explained his splendid idea. It was, that at a given moment during the durbar, the throne or thrones should be raised on high on the very shoulders of a multitude of people representing all the castes and creeds of India. The burden was not to be a mean or a small one, but something really majestic and triumphant, which, if it were to be lifted at all, would need the presence and strength of a thousand men or more. 'Let a castle rise in the air, and even if it trembled slightly it would remind the lookers-on all the more that their Majesties were being carried aloft, not by some mechanical process, but by the arms and in the hearts of living men.'

'British sentiment,' I said, 'would not tolerate such a thing.'

'As to that,' was the reply, 'we are not concerned with British sentiment. Why should not India have her own way of showing her loyalty and devotion? It is no disgrace to carry, or to be carried in, a sedan chair. Why make fuss about a throne? Are you not aware that till a recent date the Emperor of China used to be carried on all his journeys, not in a sedan chair, but in something that was almost as large as a house? Five hundred shoulders willingly bowed beneath that burden. I

now propose a burden for a thousand shoulders, and it will be borne aloft for only five or six minutes at most.'

Then the Talukdar proceeded to elaborate a plan for a throne or thrones placed on a dais similar to that used at the last Coronation Durbar. It would be built upon crossed poles like lattice-work by the sides of which would stand a thousand men at attention like soldiers. At a given signal they would bend down, grasp the poles, and place the whole burden upon their shoulders. Very little practice would enable them to act in unison and without shaking the thrones. The King and Queen would thus be presented to everybody in the amphitheatre at the same time, and in a dramatic fashion. There would be no craning of necks or other undignified movements in the crowd. The darshan would be simultaneous, and the whole crowd would participate in the auspicious moment together, thus making it more auspicious still. Carried away by his idea, my friend added that every man who took part in raising the throne on high should be given the title of Taktadar, or Throne-Bearer. 'I myself,' he said, 'though I am past the age for feats of strength, would willingly volunteer to be a Taktadar, and I have no doubt that, if volunteers were called for, you would get not a thousand but twenty thousand.'

I present the idea, but as I said to the Talukdar, I

am very much afraid that British sentiment would be against it. But whatever form the next Coronation Durbar takes, I hope that the King and Queen will, as on the previous occasion, be enthroned so high that everybody in the amphitheatre will get a clear view of them.

## ODD CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS

I was coming down from Conoor, in Southern India, and the car halted by a mountain stream to refresh the radiator. By the side of the stream four or five men were seated, belonging to some caste unknown to me. They were small men, with biggish faces and long legs, and were dressed in green. I asked a passer-by if he could tell me who these people were, and he answered in a casual way, 'Oh, they are Hari Bol.' He was going on his way when I stopped him and made further enquiries. The information had to be dragged out of him bit by bit, because the man seemed to think it very strange that I should not know what a Hari Bol was. It appears that these people make their living seated on the tops of trees chanting the praises of Hari, a Hindu deity. When I enquired how one could make a living in that quaint way, my informant said, 'Oh, they select a tree which overlooks the courtyard of a house.'

'Why should that bring them any money?'

'Because they stay in the tree for hours at a time

seeing what is going on in the courtyard, and the people in the house don't like that. The women are at work in the courtyard, and a place which is supposed to be a private place has become public owing to these rascals sitting in the trees.'

'Why are they not turned off?'

'Because it is a sin to stop any man from chanting the praises of Hari.'

It appears that finally the head of the household lays some money, and some food also, at the base of the tree. If it is not enough, the Hari Bols continue to chant the praises of Hari till enough money and food have been presented. Later, I asked the men themselves if they were Hari Bols and they replied cheerfully that they were.

The pressure put, by various kinds of people in India, upon those who are really religious is very great. There are all these yogis and fakirs about, who blackmail, not only the more ignorant, but sometimes quite educated people, by threatening to commit some religious offence and then put the blame for having done it on the people they are blackmailing. Thus a man will threaten to commit suicide and add, 'When I am dead, the gods will blame you, for you could have saved my life by giving me the money for which I asked.' Sometimes the whole village may be blackmailed in this way, not a villager daring to tell the man to be off,

or telling him to hang himself and be hanged to it.

A very common way of getting money out of people is by the process known as 'sitting dharna,' which means just sitting by the gate or doorstep of the man who has to pay. The blackmailer merely sits or lies across the threshold, and he refuses to go away until he is satisfied. This process, however, is only employed for obtaining money that is already due plus some dizzy amount of interest. Afghan money-lenders sit dharna a great deal, very often in groups: two or three men to whom a village is indebted take up a position in some prominent place in the village close to the best house, and make remarks about everybody who is passing. They address endearments to the women going to fetch water; insult the men, and generally make themselves a nuisance. They have a great deal of patience, these Afghan money-lenders; they will perhaps dislocate the life of a village in this way for six or seven days on end; by that time the villagers have got together, discovered who the people are who owe money to the Afghans, and put pressure on them to pay up. By the seventh day the wretched people have got the money somehow, plus the interest, which may total many times the original sum borrowed, the money-lenders are paid and the villagers are left alone. In this case there is not any special resort to play upon the

superstition of the villagers, for the money-lenders are Mussalmans and the villagers generally Hindus.

I know of one case, though, in which superstition was used by an Afghan for extorting money. He went to the house of the debtor and chuckled there continuously for about a quarter of an hour. The debtor finally asked him what he was laughing about. He got the alarming reply: 'When I laugh, God laughs.' The debtor was so terrified at this expression that he paid up all he owed plus the interest.

Here is another case of the same kind of trick. The Afghan money-lender said in a casual way to the debtor: 'God always forgives three murders.' He said it for a second time later on. He had no need to say it three times.

Some superstitions in India concerned with animals are very hard to explain. Why, for instance, are peacocks sacred? I imagine that at one time the feathers of the animal were so valuable that rulers passed a law imposing a severe penalty on those who killed the birds. But curiously enough, though the bird is sacred, the feathers are regarded as unlucky, except for royalty. Give a man a present of a peacock fan and you will make him your enemy for life. Indeed, in some parts of India the bird itself is regarded as unlucky, and although Hindu villagers will not shoot them themselves,

some will ask sportsmen to shoot them; but sportsmen had better find out first how the villagers, as a whole, regard these birds, for some of the most unpleasant shikari incidents have taken place when a sahib has shot a peacock without asking for permission. Generally in the United Provinces it is unsafe to shoot peacocks, though I must say the cock bird is a great temptation, when he goes flying past like an aeroplane.

Apes and monkeys are sacred. The reason given is that they helped the Prince Rama when he set out on his great campaign to recover his wife, who had been captured by the monster Ravan and carried off to Ceylon. But again, as with peacocks, there are occasions when sahibs are asked by villagers to shoot monkeys that are becoming a nuisance. This monkey nuisance is one of the problems of India. Owing to the sanctity attached to these animals they have increased tremendously in numbers and are a greater menace to crops than any other kind of animal. Not only do they destroy crops, but they come into towns and villages, where they rob the shops and enter into houses, where they steal and destroy things. The big grey monkey is alleged to carry off babies, play with them for a bit on tree tops and then, getting tired of the new toy, drop them to earth. In places like Hardwar, which is a very sacred city indeed, the shopkeepers have to



barricade their stalls against monkeys, and there, though you may not kill a monkey, it is legitimate enough to give him a good hiding. So the shop assistants are armed with long sticks, which they use fairly freely, but not too freely because sometimes a monkey, when struck, will turn round and spring at the striker, who must take care not to kill his assailant even in self-defence.

Occasionally, where there is one special rogue of a monkey who is evidently the leader of a gang, steps are taken to capture him. After he is trapped he is put into a bag, the top of which is closed with string, and the monkey is then lowered into a river or a tank three or four times. He is not kept under the water long enough to drown him, but he is given a good fright. When that bag is opened, out flies a monkey who disappears very rapidly and he is never seen again, at least in that locality.

Sometimes an angry villager or a shopkeeper will adopt another plan. After the monkey has been caught, he will be pinioned and his hind-quarters painted some rich colour. He is then released. His own kind will no longer have anything to do with him, and they bite and maul him about a bit before they turn him out of the troop.

I was told of a case – but this was in South Africa – in which a baboon was painted a bright red. The animal was turned out of his troop in due course,

but strangely enough it returned to the farm where it had been painted and became a tame and domesticated animal, following the farmer about, refraining from picking and stealing and only eating what it was given. But the Indian apes and monkeys are not like that; a painted monkey will take to the woods where he will live a solitary life.

We have had peacocks and apes, what about ivories? Although there is an elephant god, Ganesh, the elephant itself, so far as I know, is not sacred, though to own an elephant adds greatly to the prestige of the owner. Recently, however, many princes say boldly that they do not care about the prestige; they would rather have a fleet of motor-cars than any number of elephants. The motor-car, indeed, has been a great blow to the domesticated elephant. Many planting firms and others prefer to use lorries for transport purposes, and the elephant is no longer wanted as much as he was. One result is that men of lesser degree own elephants to-day; they are cheaper. I have heard it said that it no longer pays the Government to support the elaborate establishment that used to exist at one time for the capture of elephants.

As a consequence, herds of wild elephants are growing larger and more numerous, and because it is still illegal to shoot wild elephants, the increase in the number of these animals is sometimes a

menace to villages and plantations in the forest that they inhabit.

Apart from the danger that rogue elephants are to human life, sometimes whole herds will take it into their heads to rush a village or a tea garden, uprooting plants and destroying huts and pull up trees.

I have heard of one garden where all the pipes which carried water were torn up by elephants almost every year. It was finally decided to lay the pipes underground. Yet a few weeks after the work had been completed, the elephants had dug out the pipes and stopped the flow of water. The coolies said that the elephants had heard the noise of water running below them when they were crossing the pipe line, and it was curiosity more than mischief that had made them uproot the pipes.

The pipes were planted again deeper, and again they were torn up, and this time, to show the sagacity of elephants, the pipes had not been left lying where they had been uprooted but carried away a long distance and hidden in the jungle. It reminds me of what an officer in the Indian Army Reserve, who had been sent to our regiment, said when he was asked whether he understood the system of keeping regimental accounts: 'Yes, in Burma we teach our elephants to keep our accounts.'

Fish are sacred to some castes in India, particularly the higher castes. They are considered lucky, and a picture or a model of a fish is often given as a present, particularly in order to show respect and admiration, though I doubt whether, in India, regard for the fish is carried as far as it is in Tibet. There, killing of a fish is a very great offence and might even be followed by a penalty of outlawry. They say that once, when a monk killed and ate a fish, that the Dalai Lama, many hundreds of miles away, became seriously ill; and it is chiefly in order that high officials at Lhasa may keep good health that Mount Everest explorers are warned against catching fish.

But chief amongst the sacred animals of India is the cow. Some suppose that the veneration for the cow is due chiefly to the part the animal plays in the Hindu economic system; butter and milk cannot be defiled if handled by a lower caste man. A Brahman can only eat food which has been cooked by himself or by a member of his family, but he can take milk from any Brahman; more than that, he can take it from a Rajput. A Rajput, though he may only eat food cooked by people of his own caste, may accept such food, provided it has been cooked with butter, from members of a lower caste. This goes on all through the social scale, and so milk is the common food of all castes.

By common I mean it is the food which anybody can sell or pass to anybody else.

Before the more prosaic and settled days it was death to kill a cow in a Hindu State. Unfortunately, in many parts of India it is no crime to ill-treat a cow, much less a bull. I remember a case in which a British officer in an Indian State shot a bullock which had broken its leg. There was a greater disturbance than if he had lined up a number of villagers and shot them. This officer told me the story himself. He was roughly handled by the villagers, seized by the State police and shut up in a cell for several hours while mobs howled outside. However, the police finally gave out that he had been taken away and drowned. Thereafter, he was removed by night and escorted into British territory.

A strange superstition in India relates to certain domesticated, though once wild, animals. That is to say, the tame tiger is venerated, and sometimes even a tamed eagle or vulture. The two most venerated birds in India belong to a temple in South India at a place which has quite a short name for South India. The name is Tilukhkalikhunram. These birds are supposed to be as old as the temple itself, and the temple, both the priest and the public say, is millions of years old. The birds are vultures, and I think it is generally agreed that a really tame

vulture is not often seen. Pilgrims to the temple say that the birds are not confined in any way, but at three o'clock precisely to the minute, the birds appear from nowhere, perch on a platform and are fed by the priests.

There was a correspondent of *The Times* who disbelieved this story, and he took the trouble to go himself to the temple, which is in a very out-of-the-way spot, to disprove it. He arrived there a few hours before the vultures were due, but a crowd was already assembling and he was assured that at three o'clock the birds would arrive. He was given a special seat in order to observe them. Some minutes before the appointed time a priest took him by the arm and pointed to the horizon. There, sure enough, the journalist saw two black specks advancing at a tremendous speed and increasing rapidly in size. These presently resolved themselves into two vultures, and the gong was sounding when they dropped on the platform. If the gong did not sound precisely at three, it was so close to three that it did not matter. When the birds had settled a priest came forward with balls of some foodstuff which he waved over the birds' heads. They opened wide their beaks and the stuff was dropped in. When both had had their fill, both got up and flew away into the distance. 'This has been going on,' said one of the priests, 'for

ever and ever. Not the oldest one of us here has known a day, whatever the weather was like, when the birds did not come, and always they are the same birds. Is it any wonder that we venerate them, though they are only vultures? What makes them come, and where do they go to when they leave us?' To these questions *The Times* correspondent was not able to make any reply. He went down the hill thinking deeply.

Two or three years ago I was prompted to republish this story. Shortly afterwards I received a letter from a man who explained, not only how this bird business was done, but how it happened that certain mystics and saints living in the jungle have animals like tigers coming to them to be fed, and always at a certain fixed hour. The animals concerned, whether they are vultures or tigers, are, of course, caught young. Then always at one hour and no other they are given a pill composed of flour, inside which is a small dose of opium. It is that opium the animals are after. As for the vultures living for thousands of years, that is nonsense. When a vulture is growing old, a younger one is trained to take its place.

But when one thinks about the superstitions of India, the Ohjah must come to mind. This man bears a strong resemblance to the African Juju or the Medicine Man of the Red Indians. He dresses in a

fantastic way and carries about with him all kinds of horrible and fantastic things. Ohjahs not only pretend to restore sick men to health but they insist that they can, by their arts, discover criminals and restore lost property. I think so far as their semi-police activities are concerned, they merely resort to tricks. In India very few crimes are perpetrated in a sahib's household without some of the servants knowing who did them. If the sahibs do not know it is because they are not told; but thieves and criminals are often great boasters, and they relate in the bazars how cleverly they have robbed this or that sahib. Then, very often, especially in cases of theft, a member of the household is the criminal, and it would not take the Ohjah very long to discover who the culprit was. So there are some flourishes and mumbo-jumbo and the property is found and the thief punished. I have never paid much attention to stories of the wonderful detective abilities of these magicians. Many of them belong to castes so low as to be almost outside the pale of Hinduism.

Where the sick are concerned Ohjahs are sometimes very successful. It may be that some of their herbs and other things have a value that is not yet known to science. Nowadays the doctors are saying that various animal poisons, such as snake venom or scorpion venom, have a beneficial effect when used in the treatment of certain diseases like



cancer. I do not know whether this is true or not, but it is a fact that Ohjahs do make use of snake venom. It is not merely a case of their saying that certain substances which they produce are composed of snake venom, but they actually pay for such venom. There are men who make money by collecting snake-poison for the Ohjahs. It is a very simple matter to collect the venom which lies in the poison sac of a snake. All that needs to be done is to hold a piece of cloth in front of the snake. It strikes the cloth, ejects the poison into it, and later on the poison can be squeezed out of the cloth into a receptacle. But apart from administering drugs Ohjahs have some methods of curing people which I do not think science would approve of. In certain cases patients are lightly rubbed over not only on the afflicted spots but all over the body with nettles. The more they scream, the more relatives and other persons are pleased. Surely this is wonderful medicine ! When the man or woman is duly covered with red blisters, the Ohjah goes away. As often as not, the patient next morning says he or she is much better, for the Ohjah says that if the patient is not better the dose will have to be repeated. In other cases nettles are not used, but good and hefty canes, and again there is a threat to repeat the dose if it is not effective the first time. I regret to say that sometimes the Ohjah

is brought to treat a patient who is not ill but who deserves to be paid out in some way; in fact there is the joke about Ohjahs and mothers-in-law. If such a relative is not loved in the household, it is said that she is ill. Then along comes the Ohjah.

The Ohjah can also bring rain, and he has the dreadful power of withering trees. Even those village people who think him rather a joke as a physician believe that he can make rain to fall. And if a tree becomes prematurely old, they say that an Ohjah has done it. In Northern India, particularly in those parts that come under a Tibetan influence, rain-makers go about in groups, visiting villages in rotation and offering to ensure that there are good crops during the spring. The insurance is not only against drought, but against storms and floods. The rain-makers are not paid very large sums, but they do get some money. The men come every year, except in the year succeeding drought or floods. Naturally they keep away then, but they send another group that are not known to the villagers as failures. By means of this rotation the rain-makers, as a whole, continue to keep their custom. They form a very close trade union, and I think it is true that they put nearly all their money into a central fund which is distributed evenly amongst all those concerned, except for a small sum per head, deducted for the benefit of a mysterious

man known as the 'Great Magician.' The rain-makers, I think, originally came from Tibet, because they are Mongolian in countenance and physique.

In Tibet the rain-maker is a professional man resident in the village itself. His duty is not so much to bring rain, as to keep it off. Whenever a storm threatens it is the duty of the rain-maker to climb to the highest point in the vicinity, and sometimes that is very high and steep indeed, and there do exactly what the great Greek did, defy the lightning. He is armed with a sword or a spear, and there he utters imprecations against the elements and thrusts into space with whatever weapon he has. And he has to stay there for as long as the storm continues: he dare not return to the village. Sometimes the man does not return; the cold and exposure have killed him. Also if the storm is very severe – hailstorms are very disastrous to crops in Tibet – he dare not return at all, and so there is another outlaw – an abominable snowman.

Although there is a good deal of belief in these magicians and others, there is also a great deal of scepticism; not every man who claims to have miraculous powers is accepted as a miracle-worker; but there is one class of person about whose powers there is very little doubt. In India, power, particularly magical power, is to be gained by practising various kinds of austerities. If you show signs of

having practised various forms of self-denial you are looked upon as the most likely man to possess the power to perform miracles. Here is a story that is frequently told in India to show that mortal men may even attain to the powers the gods possess. One day a messenger came to Siva, the Destroyer, and said: 'Have you no common sense, or are you merely ignorant of the fact? Do you not know that in the forest of Brindaban there is a man of the Teli caste who is practising such a terrible austerity that he is very likely soon to be equal with yourself?'

'Why?' said Siva. 'What is he doing?'

'Well, he is hanging by his toes from the bough of a tree, and he has now done that for two years.'

Siva was alarmed. He whispered something to the messenger. On hearing this, the messenger took Siva's sword and went down to the forest of Brindaban. There he found the Teli, and addressed him as follows:

'You have committed a great sin in trying to make yourself the equal of a god. Luckily you have been caught in time. Now my orders are to cut off your head. But because of what you have done, Siva has made up his mind that after you are dead you will be born a Brahman.'

A Teli, it should be said, is an oil-presser, a low caste in India; and to be reborn a Brahman is for a

Teli a very great triumph. So the Teli prepared himself for death.

The way in which men who claim miraculous powers announce the fact that they have gone through periods of intense bodily suffering, is by displaying withered or mutilated limbs. A man can be seen with a withered arm, not hanging down by his side as would an arm which had withered naturally, but sticking straight up in the air. The man has kept it there till all the blood has drained away from it, and all the flesh has become dry and the bone has set. I have seen dozens of these men on the occasion of some great festival. On enquiry, they have told me that it takes from five to seven years of holding the arm up without moving it in the slightest degree, before it is set; but another religious man who had nothing of this kind to show said: 'Don't believe him, sahib. What he has done is to go to Hardwar and to have one arm tied above him to the branch of a tree. He sits there with his arm tied for no more than a year, and if he says that it has taken him more than a year, he is a rascal.'

Other ascetics merely keep their fists closed till bits of nail appear on the other side of the hand, and of course the hand is useless for any purpose. I imagine this process is almost as painful as the other of the withered arm. Anyway, both classes make good money by uttering blessings or giving people

some article they have cursed in order to pass on to others, who will then themselves be cursed.

Cursing reminds me of a strange scene I once witnessed in a Punjab village. Two women were having a violent quarrel. The abuse used was very rich and strange; so strange indeed that several village people gathered round to hear what would be said next. Suddenly one of the women stopped in the middle of a sentence and pointed to the sun which was just dipping below the horizon. When the other woman noticed that, she said no more. But she took up a stone which she put inside an earthen vessel which she then covered with a lid. The two women went on their way. I asked one of the men what the incident meant, and he quoted a phrase which I think the Psalmist uses: 'Let not the sun go down upon thy wrath.' The man added that next morning the woman would take the stone out of the jar and the war would begin again.

There is an enchanted district in the vicinity of Rawalpindi through which the river Leh runs. Some years ago a party of ascetics took hold of one of their number, tied him to a tree and put him to death with strange rites and ceremonies. Afterwards when they were tried for murder they said that they were merely going through a ceremony of which they had read in a book, and which when completed would have

brought enormous wealth to everybody concerned with it. So here was a case where the pain and torture had to be borne by someone else. As a rule seekers after power only torture themselves. Sometimes they go so far that, according to a statement that was solemnly made to me by a Punjabi who should have known better, they cut off their own heads and lay them before the shrine of some god. When I enquired how they managed to do that, the reply was that very often the intention to perform some act of self-sacrifice gives a man the power to perform that act. Therefore the headless man can very easily pick up his head and carry it to a shrine.

Once I watched a shrine being built under a banyan tree. An earthen platform was built up. It was whitewashed and marked with the sign of Siva, a trident. When I enquired what the shrine was for, a man standing by said: 'Oh, that is for somebody's head.' He refused to say more than that. A few days afterwards, passing the spot, which was in a very public place - hundreds of people must have passed it daily - I was horrified to find a head there, with streams of blood running down the platform. However, closer examination showed that the head was made of clay. There was a man there with an offering of flowers, paying his devotions. 'Whose head is this?' I asked him. He

replied that it was his own head. Further conversation drew from him the statement that some strange god of his own was very careless and would mistake the head for a real human head, and that strange powers would come to the owner of the head.

'Come now,' I said, 'what powers do you expect to get?'

The reply was: 'I am an ignorant man and I have asked for knowledge.'

Some of the lower castes in India are very fond of proclaiming their ignorance. But then their ignorance covers all kinds of crimes. They say that they do not know good from bad. I was reporting a case once, taking down questions and answers, without exactly thinking of what I was taking down. When I was writing out my report I found I had put down the following:

Question: Why was your evidence so different in the lower courts?

Reply: I am an ignorant man and have no regard for the truth.

The lawyer who had asked the question was still in the room, and I turned to him and quoted this passage and asked him whether I had taken it down correctly or not, and his reply was: 'Yes, that is quite right. I made a special note of it myself.'

So far as superstitions are concerned, I think judges and magistrates and people of that sort in



India come across more instances of the part superstition plays in India than do most European residents. There is no doubt that when a man swears on the head of his son, it is very likely he will tell the truth, but an experienced magistrate told me that he always took good care, when a man swore this terrible oath, to enquire whether the child produced was his son or not. Sometimes a strange boy is produced from the bazar and an oath which is valueless is sworn on his head. The boy gets nothing except a thump or two when it is all finished.

Oaths are also sworn on the water of the Ganges. That is to say, a bottle of water is sometimes produced; the witness is told that it is Ganges water and he proceeds to take an oath. Some people think water from the sea is as good to swear an oath upon, and the fact that instances have occurred in which witnesses have refused to swear on Ganges or salt water shows that some tremendous importance must attach to either of these.

Some years ago a man wrote to me asking for information about the meaning of a strange scene he had witnessed from his window. A syce was engaged in putting a bridle and a bit on another syce. Of course he could not fasten it quite properly, but in the end the bit was in the other man's mouth. When it was in, the other man began to

jump and twist and pretend to gallop in the same way that boys do when they are playing at horses. This business went on for about twenty minutes; then the bridle was taken off and the two men went on their way. I was unable to explain the meaning of this performance; the whole affair looked like something out of the *Arabian Nights*.

Something similar, in a way, was witnessed by myself in Lahore on the Multan Road. I had been out in that direction when a man came running past; he stopped for a moment to tell me not to go any further because there was a tyrant on the road who would certainly jump on my shoulders and make me carry him. I replied: 'What nonsense. I don't know what you mean by the word tyrant.' The man shrugged his shoulders and went his way; and I went mine.

A little distance up the road I saw what I thought was a camel approaching. In a few minutes the camel resolved itself into a man riding on the shoulders of another, quite in the fashion described in 'Sindbad the Sailor.' When the pair came closer I noticed the man who was riding the other carried a whip in his hand with which he was striking the other very savagely. When they came close enough the 'horse' cried out to me: 'For God's sake, sahib, get this man off. He will kill me.' On my making a movement towards the pair, the rider got

off with remarkable rapidity and darted into a field close by, while the man whom he was riding fell on the road exhausted. I was wondering what to do with him because there was no one about, when a party of villagers and others came riding down the road. They asked me whether I had seen the tyrant, and I pointed to the field into which he had run. The men were after him in an instant, and presently there were shouts and yells and the sound of beating. I did not attempt to interfere, though I stayed to see what the end of the incident was to be. Finally, the villagers left the rider, by no means dead, and prepared to return home. Their explanation was that the man they had beaten was a well-known character who was in the habit of leaping on the shoulders of people and making them take him for a ride. 'He must be mad,' I said. 'Not so mad,' was the reply, 'because for every man he rides in this fashion he will live one year longer, and the man he rides will live one year less. We have been on the watch for this fellow for some time. Already it has been noticed that men in the village have been cut off in their prime.' Perhaps the incident of the syce putting a bit into the mouth of another had something to do with a similar superstition.

Merchants and traders often watch for signs and omens before they do business with anybody. Pigeons are considered very lucky, and that is why

in some quarters of any big trading city in India where Marwaris reside there are many pigeons. For a pigeon to fly over one's head in the morning is a very good sign. Anything in the morning in the shape of the unusual is a good thing. It is good to do business early in the morning, a fact that few Europeans who are trading with Indians understand. They want to stick to the usual hours. They abhor getting up at all to discuss the price of wheat or rice or piece-goods. One of the reasons why in the days before the war the Germans were getting a firm footing in the European trade with India was because they did not mind getting up at dawn. I used to know one or two men, Germans, connected with the hide trade very well, and they told me that it had been quite a simple thing for them to oust their British rivals. The hide bazar, they said, opened at dawn. The British merchants refused to do any business before ten o'clock, so that practically finished them.

This preference for the dawn extends to other things besides trade. In Calcutta, amongst the best classes of Indians, it is quite a usual thing to start tea-parties before the sun has risen. There are some politicians and others who, in order to stay in the popular eye, keep open house from dawn to about eight or nine o'clock. This open house is not very expensive, because the host only provides tea and

biscuits. I have been to one of these tea-parties and found it very amusing: everybody was lively and talkative, and of course there was a freshness of the air which was very invigorating.

In Europe midnight is always supposed to be the hour suitable for charms and ghosts and incantations. In India the suitable time is always either sunrise or sunset, and it is worth noting that Mussalmans use these hours as suitable for prayer. In religious and orthodox households in India the priest who is maintained by the family always wakes the gods at sunrise. In temples they blow conches. That, I suppose, is the most difficult instrument in the world to get any sound out of. Sometimes the conch sounds much more beautiful than at other times; those are lucky occasions.

## CAVES IN FACT AND FABLE

Mention has been made in the first chapter of the cave in which the great snake is supposed to dwell. And, though knowledge of them is not general, there are great caves that actually do exist in India. Except on the North-West Frontier, the majority of these caves are natural and not hewn out by hand. In some cases stone-cutters and others have been at work with their chisels and tools and fashioned a natural cave into a temple. These caves are known to all tourists and photographs of them are on sale in places where tourists congregate. Pictures are to be found in books, and sculptors and artists have studied the caves for their decorations. I know of one such cave in Hyderabad (Deccan) which an artist studied for many months in an attempt to copy the mural paintings it contained. Adjoining that cave was another which had no decorations. It was inhabited by a tiger. Higher up the hill, and lower down also, there were other caves in which bees had built their nests. The artist was a Hindu; the paintings were of a religious nature; and the Hindu had all the

detachment of his kind. He was so busy with his studies that he was indifferent to the fact that a tiger spent the greater part of the day in the adjoining cave. He would probably not have mentioned the tiger when talking about his stay in the cave, but for the fact that some Gond boys were in the habit of creeping up the hill opposite to the cave and from there annoying the tiger by discharging pellets at it from their bows. Everybody should know the Gond pellet-bow. Instead of one string, it has two, which are kept apart for an inch or so by the insertion of a little bit of wood. Half way down the strings is a bit of cloth which is sewn on, and in that pocket is lodged a hard pellet made of clay. At thirty or forty yards such a pellet can kill the biggest birds, and the Gonds carry this bow especially to kill birds with.

The boys must have concealed themselves behind some jutting rock a hundred or more yards away. From this point they would discharge pellets into the cave in the hope of baiting the beast. Presumably the tiger never suspected that the boys were behind the smart stinging sensation it often felt on its flanks.

Finally, unable to put up with annoyance and certain that bees were causing it, it would spring up and dash out of the cave with a great 'wouf-wouf,' while the Gond boys shrieked with laughter. The

artist in his cave never thought for a moment that he might, or should, take steps to dislodge the tiger, though the attacks annoyed him every day. He had no animosity against the tiger, but he disliked the boys who spent their time in irritating a creature that had done them no harm. In the end the boys were warned off by the civil authorities to whom the artist had complained. Is this not a very good instance of the different ways in which Orientals and Westerners think ? I am certain that a European artist would have either given up the study of those mural paintings or have taken steps to dislodge that tiger permanently by means of a rifle.

In Western India there are regions which are literally studded with caves, but the mouths of such caves are overgrown with brushwood and that is why they have been ignored. They cannot be seen. The caves are particularly numerous in the vicinity of Pachmarhi. They are in fact so numerous that, in spite of a deep-rooted legend that has grown up round them, people have given up the task of finding the one cave which, if found, would bring them riches beyond the dreams of avarice. I am not here talking about a legend which is merely a legend, for there may be a great deal of truth in it. Listen ! Everybody has heard of the Mahrattas and that 'chouth' they levied from everybody in the territories they conquered or swept over. 'Chouth' means one



quarter; this was the tribute that everybody who wished to live safely in the presence of a Mahratta ruler or of Mahratta troops had to pay. The Mahrattas held a sway which extended from the Western Ghauts to the Bay of Bengal for seven or eight decades. You can imagine how great was the treasure they collected during that period. A quarter of what they collected went straight to the Peishwa, whose headquarters were at Nagpur. The time came, of course, when there was no longer room in India for a Mahratta sovereignty in opposition to English rule, and an English army was set on the march to Nagpur. The city was taken. Instructions had been sent to our army that, whatever happened, the treasure of the Peishwas should be preserved intact. But when the treasury was opened only a few lakhs of rupees were found in it. Naturally there was a great to-do and for a little time the suspicion was entertained that the British troops had looted the treasury. But by degrees the truth came out. It appears that months before Nagpur was captured a great train of bullock carts had been brought to the treasury and there loaded with jewels and gold and silver. The train was then moved under an escort to one of these caves near Pachmarhi. The carters unloaded their burdens and carried them into the caves. When they had completed the task they were set upon by the escort and

every man was killed. Later on, the escort, returning to Nagpur, were set upon by a large body of soldiers sent out for that purpose, and massacred to the last man. And so the secret of the hiding-place of the treasure was lost. Those who have told me this story add that a few nobles of the highest rank were entrusted with the task of stopping the mouth of the cave. One of them stayed at the entrance for several years watching the growth of the shrubs and grass that had been planted to hide the entrance. When nothing showed, the nobleman left, and, later on, even he was unable to say where the cave had been. This story is widely believed, and I have a good reason for saying that during the war the Government of India seriously entertained for a time the idea of combing the hills round Pachmarhi in the hope of finding the treasure. I do not think that an actual attempt was made; if it was made the fact was kept a secret. Many secret deeds were done in India during the war. I have heard another story of gold-seeking by the Government of India during those years, and I think that then actual steps were taken, that is to say, a secret mission was sent out to prospect in a certain part of India where gold was reported to have been found. But this was a mining venture and had nothing to do with caves, so there is no point in telling any more of the story. Somebody produced a bit of gold, but no more was found

in the place where it was said to have been discovered.

There are other caves besides those in Western India. I cannot mention caves without thinking of the caves that occur in the neighbourhood of Cherrapunji. To most people in India Cherrapunji is merely known as the wettest spot on earth. Eight hundred inches a year is the average rainfall. This village rests on the top of stupendous cliffs that rise several thousand feet straight up from the plains of Sylhet. If you take a car from Shillong you will presently find yourself nearly on the edge of the cliff. The view, of course, is magnificent, that is to say, when there are no clouds about. But rising steeply as they do, moisture must condense on them, and hence the incessant and heavy rain. The caves are on the face of the mountains which rise from the plain: they are not easily got at and have never been thoroughly explored. No one wants to do that. It is not merely the difficulty of deep wells and flowing water; what explorers are afraid of are landslides inside the caves. It is with the greatest difficulty that any of the local people can be induced to venture inside. I remember a man, who had penetrated the biggest cave with two companions, telling me that he was amazed, when after three or four hours, in course of which the party had lost their way, to find on emerging into daylight that his hair had not gone

grey. All the time they were inside they heard the slow, soft, swishing sound of earth falling into the streams of water that were running at the bottom of all the avenues they explored. What was falling was not earth but shale, and from what this man and others have said or written I am convinced that the Cherrapunji caves are set in a tremendous hollow in the cliffs, the interior of which is composed of shale. When I first made this suggestion one or two men said that such a geological formation as a mountain of loose shale set inside another mountain of rock of some kind was not possible. Some years later the railway which had just been built over the Khyber was suddenly interrupted by a subsidence of the track in the middle of a tunnel. Examination showed that the rock through which the tunnel had been made had inside it large quantities of some kind of soft, pliable earth or rock. What the engineers did was to scoop out all this soft earth and fill the hole with concrete. The operation cost a fabulous sum.

Mention of the Khyber leads me to think of the Afridi caves. A certain number of them may be seen not far from Jamrud. These are inhabited by a poor and mean class of Pathan, so poor that I am not sure that they are acknowledged by the Afridis. But if you entered the Bazar Valley (which, by the way, you are not allowed to do), you would find

many hundreds of caves which are inhabited by a virile people. I have been in these caves, but I and the officer who was with me left them hastily. There was nobody in them at the time because there was a war on and the inhabitants had left for fear of being blockaded. But we ran out of the caves because they were full of fleas. You cannot conceive how many fleas there were, and it struck me as wonderful that any human being could possibly live in such habitations. Later on, I talked with the Afridis about these caves, and when I mentioned the fleas they laughed. 'It is quite true,' they said, 'the fleas are a great disadvantage, but not so much a disadvantage as getting a bullet through the head, as we should if we lived in the open.'

'But,' I said, 'you left the caves in order to get away from bullets.'

'Those were your bullets.'

'Yes, but when you got into the open, weren't you afraid of bullets from the people with whom you carried on blood feuds?'

'No. Because when we are fighting the Government all blood feuds are temporarily at an end.'

So that was it. Continuing our conversation I asked the man whether these caves were natural or dug out. He said that they were dug out, and when I enquired whether they ever fell in, his reply was 'Often. Many Afridis have been killed by the earth

falling on them.' Then he grinned as if it were a good joke. Then followed a story. He said that on one occasion some traitor had told the Government of a large body of Zakha Khel who had come down into the Kajuri Plains with an intent to raid a house in the vicinity of Peshawar. The whole of the mobile column came out and surrounded the cave in which the raiders were sheltering. When some men had cautiously climbed to the entrance and later examined the cave, no one was found in it, and the column returned to Peshawar disappointed. Moreover, the informant who had given the party away got into serious trouble with the civil authorities. 'But,' said this aged rogue, 'we were in the cave all the time.'

'Then how is it you were not discovered?'

'These caves are not single caves but have several large rooms, communication being through a very small hole which can only be entered by men lying on their stomachs. All we had to do was to close that hole, which could be done very quickly. We were safe inside another cave when your troops came nosing around.'

'Were you not in danger of suffocation?'

'Indeed we were, and if the troops had stayed a quarter of an hour longer, we would have had to disclose ourselves. So, you can see there is a merit in fleas.'

Obviously, the troops who had entered the cave had glanced swiftly around and then bolted, just as I had. Had they looked carefully they would not have failed to notice the fresh earth that was covering the entrance to the other cave.

It is strange that there should be no enormous cavern in the Himalayas. But that is so. I suppose the geological formation is such as not to permit of caves. There are a few though, and there is a legend that a series of caves exists in the Mussoorie hills, all connected with one another. If one could find the entrance it would be possible to descend from cave to cave into the Dun. Certain it is that waterfalls do disappear into holes in the ground in the vicinity of Mussoorie and are never seen again. I suppose the water reappears somewhere in the Dun.

There is a fairly well-known cave in the cliffs opposite Dharasu on the road to Gungotri. But very few people would take the trouble to leave the road and visit the cave; to get to it would involve a two-days' march across precipices, but with four or five other men I did this once. We found the cave easily enough because it is in the face of a cliff and has a wide black mouth. There was no kind of pathway into the cave; evidently it was not even used by animals. We got a few yards into it and then were repelled by the droppings from multitudes

of bats that were suspended on the roof above. On coming out, one of the party said, 'I will soon have those bats out,' and he then fired a shot into the cavern. What followed was terrifying, for the bats that came out of that cave literally darkened the sky, and the sound that was made by the swishing of their wings was like the sound made by a mighty hurricane. Something made me think of the famous winged cavalry of the Polish kings. These horse-men had attached to the top of their helmets a string of plumes which ran down the helmet, along the back, and finally ended at a buckle on the waist-belt. When the cavalry moved the plumes made a swishing sound. When the cavalry charged the swishing sound was changed into a mighty roaring wind. Anyway, the man who fired that shot was shaken a good deal. I said to him, 'Now you have driven the bats out perhaps you will be the first to go into the cave.' But he wouldn't, on the ground that the bats that had come out might have only been the front section of the bat army. So we left those caves alone.

It is curious how instinctively people dread bats. We seem to be afraid of them, though it is only in the West Indies and parts of South America that vampire bats are to be found. There are none in India. I have heard ignorant persons call the big fruit-bat, sometimes styled a flying fox, 'vampire,' but it is



quite a harmless creature. No blood about it. But it is very destructive to fruit. A certain class of Indian gipsies net this bat and eat it, and I have been told by one or two planters that it can be turned into a very good curry. I for one should not care to eat it, though, mind you, when the wings are folded the creature hardly looks like a bat at all, for the body is covered with fur.

But, if there are no large caves in the Himalayas, almost anywhere you can find nooks and cosy corners, and very often these are inhabited not by foxes or wild cats but by holy men. Sometimes a holy man will get himself into a corner of the kind mentioned and himself close the entrance with stones and earth, except for a very small orifice through which a man might put his hand. He takes care to inform the nearest village of what he is doing and the villagers, aware that he is practising self-imposed austerities, bring him food and milk for fear that, when the vigorous process is completed and he has attained magical powers, he will revenge himself on those who neglected him. But in one case a coolie I had went out of his way to beg some rice from me which he might cook for a holy man whose cave we had passed on the march. This coolie could not have been afraid of any revenge that the sadhu could have taken on him, and it was pure goodness of heart that led him to make the offering at my

expense. In Tibet this practice of immuring oneself is carried too far, for the Tibetans betake themselves into coffins where they remain for ten years or more. There is only a small hole in the coffin, through which food is passed, and these monks cannot sit up in their coffins. How they can bear to endure that kind of home for ten years at a time, baffles me, but I have seen quite small boys in a monastery who were looking forward quite eagerly to the time when they would spend ten years in a coffin. Too long.

Now for the greatest cavern of all, one which according to Hindu legend lies below the cave in which the great serpent dwells; it is said to be the cavern which contains a great sea, the sea into which much of the water of the Ganges flows and which is connected in the same way with other great and holy rivers. This interior sea is not merely considered a legend. Even educated Hindus believe in it, and I know of one man, a European versed in science and medicine, who is firmly convinced that such a sea exists. He told me once, quite seriously, that the sea ran along the whole length, though many hundreds of feet down, of the Ganges valley and also extended southward as far as the Vindhya range. I must say, though, that when I asked him if he had any geological proof of what he said, he was not able to produce any; nor can the Hindu pundits.

But there is the story, and they have got a firm belief in it. In addition to the cave there is another story of an enormous hole at the head of the Bay of Bengal. The hole, they say, was dug by a mighty people who had their headquarters in that locality, which at one time was dry land. These people were aware of the virtues of the Ganges, which at that time ran a good deal to the north of its present course. They thought it was a great pity that all the water of the Ganges should be wasted in the sea, so they proceeded to dig this enormous hole which would serve as a reservoir for the Ganges water. But although aware of the virtues of the Ganges they were not aware of the sanctity of the river nor of the danger and foolishness of desecrating Mother India. They were permitted to dig out the inland sea which they projected. Millions of men were employed in the excavation work, the story says, and they had practically finished the task which the purblind ruler had set them. All that needed to be done was to clear the banks left by the workmen and to cut away the last barrier between the river and the channel which had already been made for it to flow down. But before a single pick was laid to that last barrier the Ganges rose and swept it away. The torrent rushed into the lake that had been made and drowned every man working within. More than that, the lake overflowed and the waters rushed

headlong into the sea; so that not only was the lake rendered useless for the purpose for which it had been made but a great deal of cultivated land was lost, and merged into the Bay of Bengal.

This fantastic story is supported by references to a certain great hole that still does exist at the head of the Bay. It is, of course, part of the sea now and all the water is salt. Several hundred years ago, a great Portuguese ship was coming slowly up the Bay of Bengal looking for the mouth of the Hughli. It had gone out of its course; the navigator did not quite know where he was, and he was bringing the ship slowly up by guess and by lead. Imagine the leadsman calling out the depth of water, which grows shallower and shallower as he proceeds. Presently there is no sound from him and somebody on the poop is about to call down to him to enquire what he is doing, when there comes a sudden shout from him: 'No ground,' meaning that the lead has been swung out to its fullest extent but has not been able to touch bottom. The navigator, surprised, instructs the leadsman to keep on casting. Always there is the same call: 'No ground.' There are probably three or four miles of no ground. Then suddenly the leadsman finds that the lead is touching bottom again. The sea then begins to shoal very rapidly, and after a few minutes the ship is back again in shallow water.

This hole in the bed of the sea presently became known to all mariners. It may have shifted in the course of centuries, because if it is a hole in the sand such a shifting is not impossible. Anyway at the present time the hole is in the sea somewhere below Barisal and not below Calcutta. It is known to seamen and is even marked on the charts as the 'Swatch of No Ground.' A mariner told me that the word was applied to a race of waters between two rocks, but I do not think, myself, that that is correct. At least, the Swatch of Barisal cannot be connected with any rock. Later on, by accident, I found that there was another 'Swatch of No Ground' at the mouth of the Indus. Now I believe that in those older days the term 'swatch' was applied to any kind of eddy, whether between rocks or not. Unfortunately, though the 'Swatch of No Ground' is now marked on the charts and referred to in gazetteers, I have never met anyone who has actually sailed over the Swatch near Barisal and who could tell me whether there are any giant eddies there or not. It has been suggested that this Swatch is responsible for the phenomenon known as the 'Barisal Guns,' which are dull and heavy reports like those of distant artillery, heard in parts of Bengal. The water in the Swatch may be going round and round and then the eddy might be suddenly met inside the gigantic hole by another

current caused by a storm running in the opposite direction. The meeting of the waters against the bowl of the hole might cause, from time to time, sudden explosions of sound. This seems to me too fantastic and I refuse to believe it. But the Swatch is there and how it came to exist is a mystery, for the bed of the sea all round is surely sand and nothing else, sand brought down during the course of centuries by the mighty rivers that flow into the Delta of the Ganges.

It is common to speak of the Delta of the Ganges, but why the Ganges should be specially mentioned I do not know. For an even mightier river flows into the Bay of Bengal – the Brahmaputra. It is true that the two rivers are united before they reach the sea, but the Brahmaputra brings a much larger volume of water into the common stream. Once I was severely reprimanded by a tourist for saying that the name of the river which fell into the sea at the head of the Bay of Bengal was unknown to most educated men. He said he thought I was rather rude, because he knew the name of both the rivers I have mentioned. What he didn't know was that the two streams when united have a new name, not only to Indians, but also on the maps. Why that name should be overlooked is a great mystery. It is 'Padma.'

During the great Behar earthquake, in a multitude

of places enormous spouts of water came gushing out of the earth, and this fact was quoted as proof of the statement that 'loose' water existed underneath the soil, for if the water was absorbed in the soil it could not be thrown out as pure water. I think that the earthquake, and the water that came up with it, has terrified the peasantry of Behar more than anything else in their experience. I have talked to Beharis and they have said that they live in constant fear, not of the earth shaking but of it caving in and dropping them into the internal sea. I have said, 'Don't talk rubbish,' and that remark, coming from somebody who professed to know all about everything, seems to carry *some* reassurance.

But now let me tell you of some remarkable results achieved by a man, a solitary scientist, who made a study of the earthquake by himself. He had a great map of India and he was attempting to trace in concentric circles how far the earthquake had extended and how it decreased in violence the further it went. He had before him all the reports about the earthquake that were printed in newspapers in various parts of India and made notes as to the kind of destruction wrought by the shocks. Presently he found that this system of concentric circles did not work. Some of the places within the circles never experienced any shocks at all. Other

places which should have only had moderate shocks had very severe ones; two places within a few miles of each other experienced shocks of widely varying intensity. Presently this observer, making use of his pencil, found that the earthquake could be shown in a graph which resembled not a series of circles but a kind of star of which the rays were of different lengths. He described his graph to me as resembling something that might be drawn if it were proposed to describe the kind of effect which a stone thrown at a pane of glass might have. One or two of the rays extended to quite a distance; others broke off quite short from the centre of the disturbance. He said that the impression he got after completing his investigations was that the earth had received a violent blow from below, as if something had come up and struck the crust just as a stone might strike a window pane. Had he ever heard of this belief in a great subterranean sea? I do not think he had, but those who believe in this sea, lodged in a gigantic cavern, might well use the observer's graph as some proof of the truth of their belief.

These remarks do not necessarily mean that I believe in the sea below the earth. I do not, as a matter of fact, but the idea is wild and romantic, and I refer to the 'Swatch of No Ground' and to the Behar earthquake in an attempt to convince myself that there may be some truth in it. That is the



worst of most of these tremendous legends. One wants to believe them so much that one is inclined to stretch one's imagination so far that the truth gets mixed up with falsehood, and one is set down as a credulous maniac.

## THE BARDS AND OTHER SINGING MEN

India is often said to contain the habits of several centuries existing together, for instance there are men who wander about India playing musical instruments and singing songs. People like the bards and minstrels, who cut such a figure in Europe in the Middle Ages, still exist in India. They are known as Bhats, and they make it their business to wander from court to court, from palace to palace, and even from house to house, telling and singing of the glories of the brave days of old. Most of their songs relate to the heroic deeds performed by the ancestors of various Rajput clans and tribes. Ruling princes among the Hindus welcome and reward them, for the Bhat not only sings songs from memory but he can improvise them. Some of these songs become a kind of historical record, and are memorised and repeated when the Bhat has gone on his way. These men are themselves Rajputs, and they claim the right to sit on equal terms with the proudest of the Indian princes. Even Brahmans have not the same privileges as the Bhats claim. They can enter

any house where feasting is in progress and claim a seat; not only a seat but one of the best seats.

Bhats, though they claim to be above the smaller distinctions of caste, do a great deal to keep caste alive. They have a genealogy of all the big Rajput families at their finger-tips. They are the people who decide whether a man has a right to marry to the East or to the West, and by East and West I do not, of course, mean India and Europe, but the East and West as it is understood in India, Purb and Pachmi ! The Rajput clans have two great divisions, the clans of the East and of the West, and though a man belonging to a Purbia clan may marry into a Pachmi family, the Pachmis cannot marry into Purbia families.

For many years I was inclined to believe that the Rajputs were so called because they were the people of Rajputana, and it is quite true that more Rajputs are settled in Rajputana than elsewhere. Practically all the rulers in Rajputana are Rajputs. Later on when I joined the army I was sent to a Rajput regiment. There I learned that the Purbia Rajputs, that is to say, Rajputs who were not settled in Rajputana but in Oudh, claimed to be senior to the Rajputs of Rajputana in many ways and particularly as regards caste; that was why Purbias could marry Pachmi women but Pachmi men could not marry Purbia women. This was certainly news to me.

And later on still, when I was sent with a company of Purbias to reinforce a Pachmi regiment, caste troubles arose at once. The Pachmis admitted that the Purbias belonged to a superior caste and were therefore unable to accept food from Pachmi cooks. They had to have cooks of their own caste. I know that as the consequence of this and other troubles I and my company were sent off post-haste to another regiment. That regiment was the 7th Rajputs. Two days before we reached Kut, where the 7th were, the Turks cut in between and, luckily for me and my men, kept us out of that ill-fated city. We were sent from one regiment to another, and most of the time I had a lot of trouble in seeing that the caste prejudices of my men were respected, because as the war proceeded it was not always easy to give my men the food and the opportunities for cooking it which are necessary to men of high caste. However, that is another story.

I used to ask my Indian officers why, if they considered themselves superior to the Pachmi Rajputs, they were not living in Rajputana. 'Surely,' I said, 'the senior castes should be those in Rajputana. You are only an off-shoot.'

'Not so,' replied the subadar. 'What do you think is the meaning of the word Rajput?'

To this I replied: 'Surely a Rajput is an inhabitant of Rajputana.'

Subadar: 'Not so. Rajput means the son of a king - Raj and putra. Rajputana is merely a part of India that the Rajputs have conquered and held just as they conquered other parts of India. The true Rajput originated in Oudh.'

An officer of Pachmi Rajputs told me that the subadar was taking advantage of my ignorance. He added that there was an army handbook relating to castes and tribes which stated distinctly that the Pachmis belonged to superior castes. His intentions were so kind that I did not like to say that an army handbook might be wrong. Only recently I had an opportunity of discussing this matter of the Rajput clans with a high Indian authority: his view was that certainly the ruling chiefs in Rajputana belonged to the highest Rajput caste, 'but,' he added, 'their subjects are considered inferior in caste to the Purbias.' So there it is.

To get back to the Bhats. They carry harps just like the minstrels of old, and I am told that some of them can play on lutes and similar instruments. More than that, a few of the most prominent of them not only sing songs about heroism on the battlefields and of the gallant deeds performed by great men of this or that clan, but also love songs. They are troubadours as well as minstrels. That, at least, is what I have been told, but I may say that I do not believe it. The Rajputs would not allow such

songs to be sung at their feasts, and the Bhat must have a big audience. He never sings for one or two men only. He must have the limelight; there must be a big feast on, and at some point in it he must be the central figure.

But the Bhat is a high man and he exists for high men only, so the common people have never heard him sing. They have their own singers, prominent among whom are the Bhangs, who provide a strange kind of comic relief to life both in the bazars and in the country, where they attend fairs, markets and other gatherings. You will never hear a Bhang in a big city like Calcutta or Bombay. He attracts too large a crowd, and a crowd of the kind which, after enjoying a performance, melts away without giving the performer any money. But it takes two to make a real Bhang. I will describe what Bhangs do.

All Bhangs are large men with fine melodious voices. I do not know whether these voices are natural or whether they go through a period of training, but I have never heard one with a cracked voice. A Bhang will come into a fair or a market-place, carrying a drum and a spear with a flag on it. He will drive the spear into the ground and then begin to beat on his drum. When sufficient attention has been directed to him (and it does not take very long, because the Bhangs and their flags are

well known), he begins to call in a loud voice something like this: 'Listen, all ye people, I am Malum the Great, the noble Malum. Everybody knows me and I know everything and everybody. I have come here to sing songs about myself, because the more you know about me, the happier you will be.' He goes on in this strain for a while; then suddenly another voice is heard, thirty or forty yards away. A drum beats and continues to beat, and presently the speech being made by the first Bhang is drowned by the voice of the other. What he says is something like this: 'Who is the man to whom you are listening? Is it that braggart, that coward, that snake, that ape, Malum? Do not listen to him. He was born on a tree. If he swears that he was not, then all I can say is that he was born under a tree. Do not listen to him.'

Malum retorts, calling the other a frog, a mouse, a pig and names of that kind. And presently his words, though they are still abusive, begin to take a rhyming form; the man is uttering some kind of verse, but it should be noted that, although there is abuse in it, the abuse is not of that very terrible kind that one may hear in a bazar when two men are really angry with each other. The Bhang for the moment keeps within limits. As soon as he stops to take breath the other man begins to reply, also in terms which soon begin to take the

form of rhymes. Then the first Bhang has his turn, and this time one notices that the terms of abuse he applies approximate more closely to what may be heard when two rude people of the lower caste quarrel. The crowd is now getting excited. When the time comes round for the second man to reply, a volley of real abuse in rhyme, punctuated with taps on the drum, is heard. This performance is known in India as 'abuse with music.' Of course none of the educated classes would dream of listening to it; but sometimes I have seen a man of these classes pause on the edge of the crowd and then go away laughing, for it is really very funny. The end comes just when you think that the two men are now certainly bound to fly at each other's throats. One of them suddenly interrupts the other. 'What,' he cries, 'that expression ! So abominable a term could only have come from my brother. Yes, it is he.' Then the two men rush at each other and embrace. After that they produce a small bag into which people put their offerings. One or two people in the crowd go round with them and make sure that they get something from nearly everybody. Whether these other men are in the pay of the Bhangs and share the profits, I cannot tell, but in one case, I know, one of the supervisors had nothing to do with the Bhangs. The little party goes from the crowd to the shopkeepers and stall-holders who



have been within hearing of the performance and demands gifts. Generally, they get a gift in kind, a handful of rice, some sweets, vegetables.

The Bhangs have their female counterparts. I used to think that the Bhangis were merely the female of this species, but I am assured by a Bengali friend that Bhangis belong to an entirely different caste. Anyway, when Indians speak of Bhangis they mean the women of that caste. They are permitted to enter into zenanas and they sing comic songs to the women. I, a man, cannot tell whether these songs are similar to the songs of the Bhangs, but in any case these women are welcomed in harems on occasions of marriage and, I understand, sometimes get a great deal of money.

The Bhangis are not to be confused with the Banghis, who are a caste of people who hire themselves out as carriers. In the early days of John Company they carried the parcel post. I myself saw the other day a label which must have come off a box. It had an address on it and the words, 'By Banghi post.' I think these Banghis were also doolie-bearers and were largely employed in the Indian Army hospitals. They are people one seldom hears much about nowadays, and I suppose they are being absorbed into occupations other than that of carrying things about for other people.

A fourth class of singing people in India is a

sub-section of the Bangalas. Many Europeans believe that the Bangalas originated in Bengal : hence the term. But I do not believe that. They look like people from the United Provinces, and the songs they sing are not in Bengali but in Hindustani. Many of them are not singers but acrobats and snake charmers. I was told that only one man in each family takes up singing ; another male trains for some other accomplishment, such as rope dancing or walking about on giant stilts. I think the Bangalas are the only people among the lower castes who deliberately do not allow a child to follow its father's occupation.

Now, the Bangala songs are lovely songs. They are not stately and dignified, like the songs of the Bhats, nor rude and vulgar like the songs of the Bhangs and Bhangis ; but the Bangalas sing little country songs, sung to small stringed instruments. There is only one man, as I have said, in a party, but there may be two or three women and a child or two. Bangala parties as a rule avoid big crowds ; it is their practice to sing in villages, and if they enter a town they will go to the shops in side streets and sing there. I have known a little concert-party of this kind bring tears to the eyes of the hard shopkeepers in Calcutta side-streets. On one occasion the chaprasi in my office begged for leave to go down the stairs and listen to a Bangala party that

was performing in the street. He said that they reminded him of his old home and the family he had left behind. This chaprasi (door-keeper) was not a man from whom I would have expected any sentiment, yet two days after he had heard these people singing he came to me and said that he had 'cut his service' and was going to his country. When I asked him why he had made this sudden decision, he replied simply that the Bangalas had reminded him of his home and fields. Their songs, as I have said, are in Hindustani, but the Hindustani is of the more rustic kind and would hardly be understood except by peasants.

If you were to ask for the name of the leading Bhats and other singers of India, you would be told that the real Bhats, the men who made the original and traditional songs of Rajput chivalry, are long since dead. The present generation of Bhats is composed mostly of men who are merely repeating what their forefathers sang. There are, of course, many great musicians in India, but they do not come into this discussion since they do not belong to any special caste. Many of the sweetest singers in India are men of the highest and most educated classes, for music in India is an art that is well understood and appreciated. But there is one name that crops up frequently. The man has been dead for many years.

He was a singer of the Bhang type, though he was not a Bhang; he was, indeed, a Feringhi. This word in India is generally used in a contemptuous sense and is applied to people of European descent who have sunk socially and in other ways. When applied to Europeans in general, the person who applies it as a rule means to be rude; it is just as offensive to say Feringhi of a European as it is to say Nigger of an Indian. The use of these words should be forbidden by law. But the word Feringhi has now a special meaning: the Feringhi caste is to be found in Eastern Bengal, and the members of it have assumed Eastern customs, wear Eastern clothes, have adopted the Bengali language, and have become cultivators.

I remember once asking a man whom I took to be a Bengali, what his name was. To my amazement he replied: 'Thomas.' On my expressing surprise, he said that he was a Christian and that he owned land in Eastern Bengal near Barisal. Later on I was told that there was quite a colony of Feringhis in the Barisal district. At one time they were living by hunting and shooting, because in the earlier days all people claiming European descent were permitted to carry firearms without obtaining permission from the police. These Feringhis also made a little money at marriage festivals and similar jubilations. They were allowed to manufacture fireworks and to let

off guns. To-day, in respect of guns, Europeans and Indians are on an equal footing. Everybody has to get a licence from the police, and if you want a licence for a revolver, the trouble in obtaining it is so great that most people, whether European or Indian, prefer to do without revolvers.

Now, at the beginning of the last century there was a Feringhi named Antony, and he became a very celebrated singer in Bengal. I find his name in a book about the great poets of India, and he is regarded as an Indian.

Antony became celebrated in rather a curious way. One day – it must have been somewhere round the year 1800 – there was a quarrel in front of a large tank known as the Red Tank in the official and business part of Calcutta. There was shouting and cries of 'Beat him,' and a great strong voice dominating everything. The noise attracted the attention of a wealthy Bengali merchant, and he went to the spot to see what was happening. The loud voice belonged to Antony, and he was abusing certain sepoys of the Company. It turned out that these sepoys had attempted to bathe in the tank, but had been turned out by certain guards who were there to see that no bathing took place, for the tank supplied the Settlement with much of its drinking water. The sepoys, like most arrogant soldiers, said they would not take orders from any water-guard.

They set upon these guards, and it was then that Antony Feringhi interfered. He is described as a tall man with piercing eyes and a hawk-like face. His interference did not take the form of physical violence. He merely told the sepoy what he thought of them, and so savage and terrible was the language that he used that the sepoy presently shut their ears and made off.

Our Calcutta merchant was pleased at what he had seen and heard, for he was looking out for a man who had the kind of gift that Antony Feringhi possessed.

This merchant's desire for a man skilled in vituperation throws a strange light upon the social life of the wealthier Bengalis of those days. I am told that many Europeans also took part in, or were present among the audience at the performances I am about to describe. These performances consisted of 'abuse-with-music' parties. A man who wanted to entertain his friends would ask them to a feast at which, after the eating and drinking was over, a master of abuse with music would begin his recitations. These masters were not professional Bhangs but men belonging to various castes or even amateurs who thought themselves gifted in this particular direction. But at parties the abuse was not levelled at somebody who was in the pay of the performer, but at the guests. One guest was picked

upon, very often the chief guest, and at him were levelled all the criticisms that the performer could think of. The attack was mild at first, but before it was over the victim was writhing under the sneers and jibes and general attacks that the critic made. Meanwhile the audience rocked with laughter. The higher the rank of the man attacked, the greater the laughter. After one guest had been laid low, it was the turn of another, and a good 'gali-wallah' would go through all the guests present, pointing out the weak points of each, criticising their ancestry and making those laugh who had recently been writhing under a similar attack. It was supposed to be the height of bad form to resent this abuse with music. The one man who was not attacked was the host himself, but Bengali society of course would not tolerate the host escaping scot-free; one day he would be asked to a party, and then perhaps the very man whom he had hired to abuse others would select him as the principal object of attack.

The Bengali merchant who picked up Antony Feringhi must have suffered severely at a party, for he took some trouble in having Antony trained in music and the arts of rhyming. Then there came a day when he released Antony upon the world, and remember that the leading performer at these abuse-with-music parties had to be well acquainted with the family and personal history of the man he was

attacking. Unless there was some kind of truth behind what he said the shaft would fly wild, but Antony had memorised what he had been told about various leading members of Bengali society. His success was instantaneous. So great did his vogue become, that finally the merchant who had introduced him to this method of earning a livelihood had to allow him to set up on his own. As everybody wanted him at a party Antony soon became a rich and distinguished man. I have tried to get hold of some of the rhymes that Antony made, but it is not easy. There may not have been strict laws about libel or slander in those days, but somehow nobody seems to have kept any Antonian verses; it seems a pity.

Both Bengali and Hindustani are languages melodious enough to entice into poetry anybody who speaks them. They are like some of the Latin languages, and that is one reason why India is so full of poets. It is possible to find aged men in Calcutta to-day who will say that the old fire and vigour has gone out of Bengali verse, but what they are really lamenting is the passing of Antony Feringhi and his type of verse. There is still one relic in Bengal of those abuse-with-music days, and that is a procession which passes annually through the streets of Calcutta taking off in various ways the lives and activities of prominent people. For



instance, you will see, in a highly decorated car, a man got up to represent some famous Nationalist leader. He is in the act of changing his European clothes for Indian ones, and the car has a legend to the effect that as a caller is entering the house the quick-change artist must show that he is firstly an Indian, who would not dream of wearing European clothes. This would be a jibe at some quite famous man who was not above wearing dress clothes at a European restaurant, though on a Nationalist platform he would denounce everything European. An Indian may laugh at a foreigner (and small wonder), but he is the first to laugh at his own foibles.

## GIPSIES AND THEIR WAYS

The Bhangs and the Bhangis form only a tiny subsection of the two great gipsy tribes in India, the Oads and the Nats. These people must be considered to be within the pale of Hinduism. They are not outside it like the forest and aboriginal tribes. It is easy enough to distinguish between the Oads and the Nats by reason of the physical differences between the two. The Oads are great, tall, broad-faced men, the Nats are small and lean-looking. I imagine the Oads are of Aryan descent and the Nats are Aboriginal. In the old days when the Aryans first descended upon India nearly the whole of Eastern India, including the greater portion of the Gangetic Plain, consisted of a forest. It was a forest which as a matter of fact extended not only to the edges of the Bay of Bengal, but was continued on the other side of the Bay into Burma and thence right across to the Pacific. It was a gigantic forest. On the edge of it, that is to say, in the country now known as the Punjab, the Aryans settled, and there they elaborated that strange code known as the

Laws of Manu. Chief amongst these laws are those which divide the Hindu people into the four great castes, out of which all the other castes have sprung. There were the priestly caste, the fighting caste, the trading caste, and the labouring caste. The Oads, I think, were from the first outside these castes; although they could not be admitted into the two higher castes, they were still fighting men. In the older days they were probably the pioneers, the men who defended the edge of the forest, and were constantly engaged with the enemy inside, the enemy being represented by Punjab dwellers who had been driven into the forest as a result of the Aryan advance. These fighters were the people, I think, who gave the name to the province of Oudh. In consequence of their continual warfare with the Nats, they would not be able to observe the ritual imposed by Manu upon the fighting caste left behind in the more settled parts. They would have their own way in the matter of food. One can imagine how the liberty they had in this and other directions would lead to the formation of quite a number of subcastes; in some parts certain members of the fraternity would be able to keep away from certain food, and being proud of that fact would give themselves a special name.

Then the Nats, though not Aryans, would presently begin to get ideas of caste themselves. That

often happens where two races are in conflict; intermingling takes place in spite of skirmishing and social customs are exchanged. The Nats have their own castes, and sub-sections too, but whereas the Oad clans generally take their name from the animals they must not eat, the Nats take them from the animals they make a practice of eating. So we have amongst the latter the Gidharias, the jackal-eaters, and the Samperias, the serpent-eaters. I am told that the Oads and the Nats are now inter-marrying, but this I find hard to believe because even sub-sections of each tribe will not inter-marry.

At one time – we are speaking of course of a period before the historical – the Aryans, settled in the Punjab, were depending solely on the Oads for protection against attacks of the people whom they had displaced, and I suppose the Oads, too, were wary of incessant warfare. In any case raids into the Aryan settlement became more ferocious and penetrated deeper. One raid led by some man from the far south even managed to penetrate to the capital, and the raiders carried off the ruler's wife. This event startled the Aryans, who had been slinking into sloth and luxury. The warrior caste was particularly roused, and the ruler himself made ready for battle, a battle that was to be on a large scale. It was not merely an expedition that Rama planned. It was a

conquest, and the plan was to subdue, not merely the tribes in the Punjab and Oudh, but the whole of India. The campaign which followed must have lasted for twenty or thirty years. As the Aryans penetrated deeper and deeper into the forest, after entirely vanquishing the Nat tribes, they came into contact with aboriginals of even a lower kind, so low indeed that they are described in Hindu traditional stories as apes and bears; but these apes and bears, strange to relate, instead of attacking the invading hosts became very friendly with them, and assisted them on their march to the furthest end of India. When the great prince Rama crossed from India into Ceylon the apes and bears still followed him and took part in the assault on the Monster Ravan, who was alleged to have been the leader of that tribe that had carried away Sita.

And this is the place for a little story about the big ape Hunuman who accompanied Rama on the campaign. When the monster Ravan was killed and Sita released from captivity Hunuman begged for permission to absent himself for seven days. Asked why he wanted leave, he hung his head and refused to reply; however Rama gave him the necessary permission and Hunuman disappeared. The reason for his private expedition was that when the grounds of the great palace Ravan had erected were entered, Hunuman had spotted a walled garden

full of ripe mangoes. Hunuman, being an ape, wanted to spend the whole seven days eating mangoes. When he started his banquet, he found the mangoes so delicious that he decided that the fruit must be cultivated in India. Thereupon, after he had sucked a mango he threw the seed a few thousand miles into the further parts of India, and that is how the mango came to India.

The memory of the campaign which made all India Aryan still persists in India. The great war is celebrated several thousands of years after in the festival known as the Dasara and Durga Pujah. In Bengal the origin of the festival has been forgotten, and the ceremonies connected with it are not of a warlike kind. In fact there are Bengali authorities who say that the Durga Pujah has nothing to do with the campaign of which I have spoken; but in the Punjab and elsewhere the Dasara festival is marked by processions which recall the story I have told. There are monster wooden cars on which are shown the images of Rama and Sita. These are escorted by men and boys wearing tails and pretending to be bears and monkeys. All round them dance swordsmen and spearmen and pikemen. A second car contains the image of the monster Ravan. This image is made of wood and paper and, when the procession is over at the edge of some great open space, the monster is taken roughly from his car and

placed on a bonfire, and when the flames rise there is intense rejoicing and people leap a yard high and congratulate each other.

On one occasion at Lahore I saw, at the time when the excitement was at its highest, a Mussalman appear on the edge of the crowd, pull out his praying mat and kneel in prayer. I do not know what the intention was; the real hour for prayer had not yet arrived and what I thought was that the object of the man was really to provoke the Hindu multitude, but nothing happened. When Hindus and Mussalmans, too, make a day of festivity, it remains a day of festivity and they will not let their angry passions rise. On other occasions I have seen Hindu Sadhus and others professing extreme forms of Hinduism marching unmolested amongst Mussalman crowds on a feast day, and even begging for and receiving alms.

But where were the Oads during this great campaign of which Rama was the hero? They are not mentioned at all. One imagines that when the fighting caste woke up from their lethargy and took a part in the campaign they would not permit the Oads, who had lost any caste standing they had, to share battle with them. The Oads were just put aside, and presently came to take their place amongst the lower castes; they were not numbered with the twice-born; but they have retained their warlike

traditions through all these centuries. On the other hand they have sunk so low in the social scale that even during the war, when all kinds of castes were indented upon for soldiers, no one thought of the Oads. And do you know when they were last thought of? They were thought of by that Sir Arthur Wellesley who became the Duke of Wellington. Though the Oads, in the more recent centuries, were not permitted to become soldiers, one great branch of them definitely had a place in an army on the march. They formed the commissariat department, supplying the grain to the troops. The name given to them was Brinjara.

When one prince made a war upon another, he sent word to the nearest Brinjara tribe and these people came along with their pack bullocks and their bullock carts loaded with grain and foodstuffs to be sold to the army. So it was a comparatively easy matter in those days to make a war. There was no question of collecting supplies and making elaborate arrangements for carrying them on the march. The Brinjaras did that. Whichever way the battle went the Brinjaras were not touched. A pursuing army left them alone, for who knew when that army would not be depending on Brinjaras to supply it with food. Yet there was always a danger that some troops would get out of hand and, finding themselves in the middle of a Brinjara encampment,



would make an attempt at loot. So the Brinjaras were always prepared to defend their possessions. They carried weapons, even the women and children had bows and arrows, for when Brinjaras followed an army they always took their families with them. That is an Oad habit. Now, not only did Hindu princes make use of the Brinjaras, but the British also did in the earlier days. I have mentioned Sir Arthur Wellesley. It was after watching a train of Brinjaras passing by, the men marching by the side of their carts with their spears on their shoulders, and women and children sitting on the carts with their bows and arrows, that the great soldier thought that something might be made of these people. But nothing came of this idea. I suppose that by that time they had got into the settled habit of thinking that in spite of their warlike traditions their business was not that of actual warfare. Perhaps, too, they were afraid of the discipline that might be imposed on them were they to become regular soldiers.

Most of the Oad clans travel in companies with their women and children. I have myself seen what Sir Arthur Wellesley saw, a train of Oads, armed with spears and swords, with their women seated on carts, carrying bows and arrows. But I do not think that this company belonged to the Brinjara section. Anyway, they refused to answer any questions.

But railways and motor cars are putting an end to Brinjaras as Brinjaras. When they ceased to form parts of armies they became grain carriers, that is to say, they carried grain from one part of India to another, selling it *en route* to shopkeepers and others, and I have heard that they could be a terror in those days to villagers, for they were not above doing a bit of looting on their own. To-day you will never hear of them.

The Oads have, I regret to say, several sections which are considered criminal. I cannot think of them as ordinary thieves. They are a cut above that, or at least their thieving is done in a novel way. Two or three families of Oads, or rather of a subsection of Oads, will march through a country. When they approach a village the men will go through it singing songs and beating on drums. This noise and excitement will bring most of the villagers and their wives and children to the doors of their houses. In the meanwhile the women belonging to the Oads have slipped round behind the houses and are picking up what they can. I have been told that the Oads take particular care to get the village children out of the way, as, naturally, children are the first to run to any place where there is promise of singing and music.

Once I was spending a night with a shikari hidden in some rushes waiting for the morning and the

flights of duck. Dawn had just come but there were no duck. While I was waiting and watching, the shikari pointed to some movement in the reeds, thirty or forty yards away, and uttered the single word: 'Oad.' I remained quite still to see what would happen, and presently the broad and hairy face of an Oad appeared. These men are observant enough, but in this case neither I nor my shikari were seen. The Oad got out of the reeds and proceeded to cross the marsh. After he had gone about fifty yards another Oad appeared and made his way silently in the same direction. In this way, thirty or forty Oads appeared and silently marched away. My shikari told me that this was the habit of this particular section of Oads. Most country people in India walk in single file, but this fifty paces' interval was something new to me. The Oads adopted it probably because they were bent on some mischief or other; by going at long intervals they thought that they were less likely to be noticed.

It is not easy to generalise about the Nats. They claim to form part and parcel of the Hindu fabric, but many orthodox Hindus will not admit that as a fact. In any case the number of clans and sub-sections amongst them are very numerous, and some certainly belong to a much higher scale of civilisation than others. They seem to have no affinity in customs and manners with one another.

You will find Nats living in villages and in towns engaged in all kinds of lowly occupations. Other Nats will be employed as casual labourers in the fields. Some pick up a living fishing and build regular settlements, others really belong to the wilds and get a living as they can from field and forest.

I have referred to the Gidharias, who live upon jackals. And here is something that most people will refuse to believe. The Gidharia need not hunt and trap his jackal. They come to him to be killed. At least, he calls them, and when they approach close enough he loosens his dogs upon them and they are killed. This calling of jackals is done in the following way: a Gidharia, or several Gidharias accompanied by their dogs, will select an open field in some locality haunted by jackals; one man will go into the field carrying the boughs or branches of a tree or a bush. He will conceal himself under this green stuff while the other men with their dogs hide in some ditch or ravine close by. Presently the man under the green bushes will begin to heave and agitate the bushes, at the same time uttering wild yells, of the kind that a pig might make when it is about to be slaughtered. The curiosity of the jackals is aroused when they hear these sounds; it is still further aroused when coming closer to investigate they find the bushes

heaving as if some animal were dying underneath. In due course the jackals will come nearer and nearer, and then the dogs will be loosened upon them.

An expert on Indian gipsies tells me that some Gidharia families are so good at calling jackals that they do not need all this camouflage of hiding under a mass of green stuff. They do no more than call, and further, while they are calling, other members of the group stand about them armed with clubs. The jackals are so interested in the call that they come right into the group and are killed with clubs. When I enquired whether the calls resembled a call made by a jackal, the reply was, 'No, nothing like it.'

There is at least one European in India who has learned to imitate the very call that the Gidharias use, and I am told that he is just as successful as the Gidharias in getting jackals to come to him. I have never heard of any Indians of other castes claiming to be able to summon these tricky animals. Sometimes, when there is a festivity or something of that kind on in a village, a Gidharia will be sent for in order to provide a bit of fun for the villagers, who sit about armed with various weapons and take part in the killing of jackals as they come up one by one.

But it is impossible to-day to talk about jackals and calling them without a reference to the phiaw.

I think it was in the earlier years of the last century that the phiaw was first mentioned by travellers. One of them said he had been out with a hunting party and that a strange animal about the size of a sheep had been driven out of the jungle, and as it went past it uttered a cry which can best be described by the use of the letters which form the word 'phiaw.' The traveller said that his host declared that this animal, which they call phiaw, was a rare and precious beast and it was a pity that it had escaped. But to-day there can be hardly any doubt that the phiaw is a jackal, which when excited utters the cry from which it takes its name. Some observers say that a fox may also utter the same kind of cry. Anyway, whatever may have been the case years ago very many people seem to hear the cry now, and most of them take it as a sign that an excited or alarmed jackal is somewhere in the vicinity.

Several men have written to me to say that they have actually seen the jackal when it has uttered the cry. A tea-planter told the following story. He was in a bungalow, the drawing-room of which was decorated with the heads of some magnificent tigers and panthers which his host had shot. It was dark outside and the lights in the drawing-room were all turned full on. Presently the planter saw a jackal come creeping up to the veranda out of the gloom.

Jackals are full of curiosity. This one ventured from the veranda into the drawing-room and looked around. Then a change was actually seen to come over its face, which became absolutely horror-stricken. It had seen the heads on the walls ! Uttering one tremendous howl it fled back into the gloom.

But besides foxes and jackals there is another animal which has a right to be called a phiaw. I think it was a man in Western India who wrote to me about this phiaw. He was in camp and was kept awake for some time by a phiaw which was uttered not far from him whenever he dropped off to sleep. And, tired of the constant interruption, finally he got up to investigate. The sound was coming from a sort of cave in a rock close to where the camp was pitched. The man crept up to the cave with a shotgun. The closer he came to the cave the louder and more ear-rending became the phiaw. At last he fired into the mouth of the cave; the sound ceased and was heard no more that night. In the morning an investigation of the cave showed a great horned owl lying dead inside. So it appears that the phiaw is not *only* a jackal.

The subject of jackals is very hard to leave. I cannot resist the temptation to say that, amongst the peasantry in India, the jackal is supposed to have a greater contempt for mankind than any other

animal. It shows its contempt by joining a pack which will assemble in the middle of a village and howl all night. These howls are very different from the phiaw; they are really derisive yells, and newcomers to India are often alarmed by them. But ordinarily the jackal is a cowardly animal and there is nothing to be feared from him. According to the villagers these yells are really laughter, and the animals are merely showing how low is their opinion of the villagers in the village they have entered. And certainly if you listen to a jackal chorus you will get the impression that the animals are really taking a pleasure in annoying and disturbing everybody. It is not hard to feel glad there are Gidharias to eat them. The villagers, getting level with the derisive jackals, will point out that there are three words in Hindustani expressing loathing. One is 'gid,' a vulture; a second is 'gidhar,' a jackal; the third is 'gidharia,' a man belonging to the clan mentioned.

Another Nat clan is the Samperia, the snake-eaters. These people are found mostly in the Sundarbans; but they claim to have come from Chota Nagpur. I place them amongst the Nats, for they have all the gipsy characteristics, but an authority whom I would not willingly contradict says that they are an offshoot of the Santhals and belong to the real aboriginal tribes. They make a



double kind of a living out of snakes. The more harmless ones they eat; others they catch and sell. Snake-charmers, who are mostly Oads, come down to the Sundarbans to buy cobras from the Samperias, and many agents belonging to medical schools and learned institutions, which want snakes to study, come to them for specimens.

I have been in a Samperia village which was really crawling with snakes and the babies crawling amongst the snakes. To make the sight more horrifying still, I saw that many of the snakes were cobras. When I enquired whether it was not very dangerous to allow babies to be crawling on the floor where cobras were sunning themselves the reply was that the cobra was the least vicious of the poisonous snakes. Moreover even the babies knew that a cobra, before it could bite, had to get into an erect position. When a cobra was not standing up it was unable to get its fangs into anybody or anything. I do not know whether this is true or not, but certainly judging by the position of the fangs it would be difficult for a cobra to eject its poison when lying flat on the ground. Babies could therefore roll over them with impunity.

An indigo planter who has only recently died was well known for his fondness for cobras. I have a letter from him in which he wrote bitterly about a suggestion I had made in a paper that all cobras

should be killed at sight. Only a very angry cobra, he said, would ever strike anybody. But why make them angry? He had several cobras in his compound and they were accustomed to come into his house and lie about in his rooms; one particularly would curl itself up on his desk like a cat while he wrote. The letter added that people were so silly about his cobras that he found some difficulty in getting his servants to stay with him.

But cobras are not so valuable, and the karait is too bad-tempered to be tolerated in a village; so the snakes that the Samperias concentrate on for other than edible purposes are the hamadryad and the python.

The hamadryad is the king cobra, and is of course the most terrible snake in the East. I do not know what methods they use to capture their snakes, but the Samperias are certainly more clever at it than any other of the tribes living in and upon the forest. A good healthy king cobra will fetch quite a hundred rupees; while pythons are paid for at five rupees a foot.

The trade in these snakes, as in all wild animals, is a very secret one. Agents come and go in a stealthy way. I remember some people who went down into the Sundarbans trying to buy a python from a Samperia encampment. This wretched snake was laced to a palm tree up and down, but the Samperias

refused to sell. They said it was going to a foreign country and that some men would presently come for it. When asked how it was to be carried away they made the motion of pouring something into a box. I heard once that the Alipore zoo had bought a very large python from the Samperias. It came up coiled in a box. When the box was opened a very angry snake indeed popped its head out, but there were some Samperias there to see to the snake, and they hurled themselves upon it; other helpers were summoned and with twenty or thirty men holding on to it, it was pushed into a cage. When there, it sulked for more than a year before it would eat anything.

As I have said, Nats do not go about in great family parties; solitary Nats are to be found everywhere. I have never quite fathomed the truth about these solitary men, but I am inclined to think that they have been expelled from the clan just as a rogue elephant is often expelled from his herd. Either they have broken some caste rules, or they are surly and dangerous men with whom the others would have nothing to do. Sometimes a Nat will follow people out shooting snipe or fishing and offer to help in various ways. A Nat I knew often came out with me after snipe. He was not asked to come and if I paid him nothing he not only did not grumble but did not show disappointment in any

way. On several occasions, walking behind me, he would tap me on the shoulder and point out a snipe actually crouching in the mud or amongst the reeds. I have never known anybody else able to spot a snipe before it rose. Again, if a snipe were missed he could follow its flight, and say where it alighted again. (I am now talking of fat Bengal snipe. I do not think the more wary and leaner Punjabi snipe, once flushed, drops again so quickly that it can be spotted.) Sometimes this Nat would bring me a fish; again he did not seem to mind whether he were paid for it or not. The trouble with this man was that there was no getting hold of the dialect which he spoke. I never knew what he said and he never knew what I said.

How do the Nats and the Oads get on with each other? As I have said, Oad snake-charmers buy their snakes very often from Nats, but that is the only case of which I know in which there is any intercourse between the two great tribes. The rest do not get on at all; they dislike each other intensely. The Oads put on airs, and the Nats are slightly afraid of them, just as in the old days they were afraid of them on the edge of the great forest. The other castes permit the Oads to say that they are Hindus, but I have often heard caste men say that the Nats were not real Hindus. On the other hand, I suppose owing to the reign of law introduced by the British

Government, the Nats cannot be forcibly prevented from calling themselves Hindus. And they do so. But they are unable to get any kind of priest to officiate at their ceremonies, and the religion they profess is a great mixture of devil worship and Animism. I have never been present at any of their ceremonies, and I think that such ceremonies are generally held in secret.

It is to be noted that the further East you go, the more does the word Nat become synonymous with devil and evil spirit. In Burma, all Nats are evil spirits, and the Burmese say the forest abounds with them.

Every now and then there is a great gathering of snake-charmers in the Sundarbans to perform some very special ceremony. The Samperias, I have been told, keep watch and ward to see that no strangers approach the locality where the ceremony is held. The spot is not very far from Calcutta. Once I got word of where this ceremony was taking place and a man volunteered to drive me to the scene. He said that no one would dare to prevent a sahib going to the spot. I rather thought at the time that this man was only after taking some money from me, but I think he was genuine, and if we did not see the ceremony it was simply because we were late. What we did see was a long line of snake-charmers coming away from the locality in single file with bent heads

and full baskets. You must know that the snake-charmer can always be told by his yellow robes and his two baskets, carried across the shoulders and slung on a pole, one basket contains the cobras and the other personal things and perhaps some large worms. These worms, I was told, are very scarce, and the Oads pay as much for them as they pay for cobras. The worms do not perform, but they provide a sort of comic relief. The charmer, when he is performing and there is a small crowd round him, will suddenly rush to the second basket, pull out a worm and fling it at somebody in the crowd. If the man happens to be a town-dweller he will certainly mistake the worm for a snake and draw back with a startled cry. And that is not surprising, for I can assure you some of these earthworms are from four to five feet long and very thick and heavy. I wonder whether the snakes are ever given small earthworms to eat. I rather think they are, because I cannot see how the snake-charmer keeps his cobras provided with food.

One could go on enumerating dozens of Nat and Oad clans, but that would become wearisome. I must, however, before I finish with this chapter, mention the birdcatchers. Sometimes a resident in a city may lose his pet parrot. His servants tell him to get hold of a chirriah-wallah. This man comes along with a series of bamboo pipes, one fitting into

another; the top one has a bit of birdlime attached. He will make enquiries as to where the cage is usually hung, and will presently find a tree in which he thinks the bird is seated, and it is curious how often he is right. If he is unsuccessful at that tree, he will make a circuit to other trees, not looking but listening. Cage-birds, when they get loose, are often mobbed by other birds, and it is for the sound of a bird riot that the Nat listens. Having finally spotted the bird, he stands under the tree and with infinite patience moves that bamboo instrument of his up towards the bird. It is hardly believable, but so carefully is the bamboo pushed upward, that the bird is not aware of it. Suddenly there is an upward jab and the bird is caught by the birdlime at the top of the pole. I do not know what this birdlime is composed of, but it is the most adhesive stuff that I have ever struck. The chirriah-wallah will, when he is out catching birds for the cage, come away from a day's outing with quite a dozen birds. Once a pole has touched a bird it cannot get away. Not only the feathers are caught, but the actual skin is held.

When I was told that the birdlime is used in certain parts to catch tigers I was rather amused, but later on when the method was explained to me I saw that it was quite feasible. What is done is this: some open glade which the tiger is accustomed to

cross every day is strewn with leaves of the pipal tree, and every leaf is smeared with birdlime. When the tiger comes along he finds, to begin with, the leaves adhering to his paws; in attempting to get them off he finds that some leaves are now sticking to his head and to his flanks. He will begin to roll and in consequence will in due time be covered with leaves. They get into his eyes. In the meanwhile Nats with bows and arrows are perched on the trees all round. When the tiger is absolutely mad with rage, and blind, the arrows descend on him and he is slain. His skin is taken off him, and his whiskers and heart are eaten, because they are supposed to give an extra bit of courage to those who partake of them.

For myself, I prefer devils on horseback.



## GUARDIANS OF THE LAW

From the gipsies there is a natural transition to the police of India, because many of the criminal tribes are clans of the two gipsy races, the Oads and Nats. It happens that in India the police represent to the majority of the inhabitants all the authority of the Government. Very little they know about the high administrators and high officials. The sahibs and important Indian officials they may see, but they do not come in contact with them. The policemen are with them in all their activities, and there can be no doubt that at one time the Indian police in the subordinate rank took a cruel advantage of the authority they possessed. They not only took bribes but they levied blackmail. I have known two or three cases in which a murder or a sudden death in a respectable family was followed by the ruin of everybody who could be shown by the police sub-inspectors to have any connection with the family; but I will not go into a condition of affairs which disappeared some years ago. On the other hand, it would be absurd to say that the police in India

approach anything like the standard to be found in Europe. A large number of police officers will demur; some indeed will be very angry, but these latter, I think, are people so proud of their service that they are absolutely blind to facts. But year by year, a better class of men are being enlisted into the police, and year by year the people are learning to know more about their own rights under the law and are less ready to be terrified or blackmailed. In fact, in some parts the boot is on the other leg. Unless the police are very careful, false charges are likely to be levied against them.

Apart from crimes committed by the criminal tribes, the police have to deal with what is termed 'dacoity,' which is exactly what they used to call in Australia 'robbery under arms.' Dacoits are not ordinary sinners; very often they come from an adjoining village or some village not very far distant from the one which is attacked. Sometimes the attack is a general one upon every house in the village; sometimes one particular house is picked out. There is a sudden rush into a village by men carrying torches and armed with spears and swords; they knock at a door.

Knock, knock.

'Who is there?'

And then comes the terrible reply: 'We are your fathers.' Everybody in the house knows what is

meant by that insulting expression. They had better open quickly or the door will be burst open, and not only everything taken, but the inmates will be probably subjected to torture. As a rule in a village the money that the householders may have saved is hidden in a hole under the hearth. If no money is found there, then I am afraid all kinds of expedients are employed to make the old man tell where his hoard of money is. If he is still obstinate, there are others, particularly the women and children, who might be able to tell. If there is any money the dacoits get hold of it. In the meanwhile the other villagers have collected on the outskirts of the village. Sometimes, when the attacking party is small, these villagers will make a counter-attack; but that is not very often, for it is possible that the dacoits have firearms; they always pretend to have firearms, for they bring with them throw-down bombs which are remarkable for the noise they can make when they are flung violently on the ground. Sometimes even when a counter-attack is possible, none is made. I remember a case where there was a dacoity in a village close to where I had a camp. I went to the village next morning, to see what had happened, and was then told that the richest man in the village had been robbed of everything he had, and had been killed. I said to the villagers that they looked a very stout, a hefty lot;

why had they permitted such an evil deed to take place ?

‘It was not an evil deed,’ said an elderly spokesman.

‘Why not ?’

‘Because Banarsi Lal was a money-lender ; we are all in his debt and when the dacoits killed him they carried off all his papers, which have probably been burnt by this time. So we are no longer indebted to anyone.’

I said : ‘You are foolish to say this to a stranger. Supposing he were a police-wallah. The first thing he would do would be to implicate you in the murder of this unfortunate man.’

The villager grew grey at the mention of the police and said no more.

Dacoities followed by murder frequently take place, I suppose ; but still the average dacoity is a straightforward robbery under arms, committed by rogues from somewhere in the same district. The trouble the police have in tracing the prime movers or even the smaller fry in a dacoity is due to the fact that no reproach attaches in most places to this form of crime. It is supposed to be a dashing thing to take part in a dacoity or two. I remember once when a sepoy in my regiment wanted to take an old muzzle-loader, that was his property and was kept in the armoury, away with him as he was going on

leave ; I said as a joke : ' I suppose you want it because you intend to commit a dacoity.' Instead of being shocked the man agreed, saying that possibly an opportunity for a dacoity would offer and it would be a pity to miss it.

But in addition to these amateur dacoits, who commit dacoity as much for the fun and excitement of the thing as for purposes of gain, there are professional gangs about. These people travel far afield and hardly ever commit a dacoity in their own district. They do not belong to any special caste, though each gang consists of men of the same caste. Nowadays the police have got a system of preventing dacoities by this class of professional dacoit, by merely keeping an eye on gangs of men who arrive together at a railway station and take tickets for any place outside the district. They warn the next district and mention the station at which the gang intends to detain. They are there warned that the object they have in view is well known and they had better go home again. Of course this system can be got round by the men travelling as individuals and arriving at their destination on different dates, but I think that nowadays the dacoity gangs do not have very long lives.

Very often, one man, after an attack on a house, is captured by the villagers ; from him the police get the names of his friends. Occasionally, a gang which

might have started a hundred strong, is reduced in the course of time to only a dozen or half a dozen. Then it becomes really dangerous. The remaining few, hunted from place to place, finally take refuge in the jungle. From there they issue forth to attack or assault everybody who happens to pass their way. Sometimes they make a mad rush into a village, where they behave with the ferocity of tigers, slashing and slaying. Several of them may possess guns, or rifles, which they use without restraint. Every man in that gang may have from twelve to fifty murders on his head. Ordinary police methods are of no use in dealing with a gang of this kind. I have said they behave with the ferocity of tigers; they have to be treated like tigers. Armed police are kept in readiness like tigers on leash till information arrives as to the whereabouts of the dacoits. Again and again the dacoits elude their pursuers, but the day will come when they will be overtaken. Then a real battle must follow. I suppose there is hardly a police officer in India who has not had experience of such a battle, which must end, as most battles do, in so many slain on each side and victory to the strongest.

Many police officers have become famous as a result of the battles they have fought with dacoits. I may mention such names as Warburton, Beatty, Holland, Pennall, Tegart, Tomkyns and Bradley.

There are many others who have been famous in their own districts. Handyside was both a policeman and a soldier, because he fought sometimes as a soldier when dealing with raiders, and sometimes as a policeman when dealing with dacoits.

I had it in my mind to tell some stories about these famous policemen, but I think I must wait for another occasion. I knew some of the men I mentioned, personally, but perhaps after all I might say a brief word or two about them.

The Warburtons were the sons of an Afghan lady of really good position, and it was said that it was due to this fact that Colonel Warburton came to have such an intimate acquaintance with the Khyber tribes. I knew his brother in the Punjab police, and they used to tell extraordinary stories about the way in which he wandered in and out of the city in disguise. I know he went about in disguise because on one occasion I was in a police station when he came in clad in a burka, that is the garment with a pierced head-piece which Indian women who are kept in seclusion wear when they walk abroad. He flung off the burka and was very annoyed when he saw me. He told me to hold my peace for ever after or there would be trouble. He was a short man, and so could pass himself off in a garment that appears to increase height noticeably.

Warburton finally was given sole political charge

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of the Khyber, and as 'Warden of the Marches' he became a very famous man indeed in India. The Khyber is held by two of the most dangerous tribes on the Frontier, the Mohmands on the right side and the Afridis on the left. The Afridis are the more powerful tribe, both because they have larger numbers and because they have more money and therefore more rifles. Many of them are educated in a certain kind of way, that is to say, they have a larger knowledge of the world. They used to enlist readily in the Indian Army, and many of them would even venture abroad; some even used to take service as firemen on ocean-going liners. Their country itself is very poor, and crops are grown with great difficulty, but the Afridis have made their money, as I say, in various ways, and the sole idea of an Afridi when he has obtained a certain amount is to buy himself a rifle and set up as a freebooter and adventurer.

As I explained in another chapter, many Afridis live in caves; so they have no house-rent to pay. The younger men amongst those who do not go abroad as soldiers or in some other capacity do a bit of cultivating. There is always a certain amount of money for the senior men because in one way or another they are paid for guarding the Pass. In the old days Afridis made their money by levying toll upon caravans going to or coming from Afghanistan.

That was stopped by the British Government. When they pleaded that they would be reduced to poverty if they did not levy tribute, the Indian Government paid them money for guarding the Pass.

These Khyber Rifles and khassadars that we read of are employed to guard the Pass; that is the way the Government pays the Afridis to keep the peace: in fact they are paid to protect travellers against other Afridis. It was Warburton's job to see that these reckless and desperate men did keep the peace which they were paid to keep. And very seldom indeed during his time was the Khyber disturbed. Local feuds went on, of course, and murders galore, but there was little raiding. I do not know what Warburton's secret was or how he kept the Afridis in order. The fact that he did it made him famous, for the experience of other officers was that peace could only exist in the Pass for short intervals.

After he had gone, the Afridis began to demand more and more money for keeping the peace. It was given after they had consented to a carriage road being built through the Pass. Later on a second road was built, running not far from the other; so for more money we got more roads leading into Afghanistan. Now there is a railway also, and the Afridis are getting more money for seeing that that is not interfered with. We have, therefore, a whole

tribe living on the Indian Government: if the subsidies and the khassadar system were dropped the Afridis would starve. The trouble is that, even with subsidies, and tribal levies paid by the Government, the Afridis have revolted time and again. They cannot be trusted, and should there be a weak man in charge of the Khyber there are continual raids into British territory.

Both Warburton and several of his successors were accustomed to say that the Mohmands who hold the right side of the Pass were negligible. They may have been so at one time, but of recent years they have given a great deal of trouble. They have not the adaptability of the Afridis, nor do they venture much out of their own country. They are a very savage tribe, and as each man is fiercely independent there is no dealing with him through any leading men, as they say they have no leaders. I do not know how Warburton would have dealt with them, but I think he would probably have set the Afridis on them. The two tribes do not live at peace; there is always fighting of some kind or other, but it has never happened that Afridis have risen against them in a body. It is always a case of families fighting, or one village attacking a neighbouring one.

It happens that one of the great police officers I have mentioned was concerned particularly with

the Mohmands, but his concern was of the fighting kind. He kept them at bay, not with words but with rifles. When I met him he was commanding a body known as the Mohmand Militia. This body consisted of Mohmands belonging to our side of the Frontier, and they did a kind of rough police-work, patrolling the line between Abazai and Bara. The Great War had started when I was there, and all over the Frontier the report had spread that all the British troops had gone to the war and therefore the Afridis and Mohmands and anybody else could do as they liked. The Afridis were cautious before they jumped in, and they soon realised that the British garrison in India had not been weakened in any way. But the Mohmands were foolish. They had not the means of learning the truth, and they made three quite big moves to attack and seize some of the Frontier forts. Handyside's duties were quadrupled, because his patrol was never at peace. The three Mohmand attempts to descend upon Peshawar were beaten off by troops, with Handyside coming in on a flank with his Militia. Once he was asked to come in when a battle was on; twice he was told to keep himself and his scallywags out of it. Whatever his instructions, Handyside took good care to be present at a battle. But as a matter of fact during the whole of 1915 he and his Militia were at war with the Mohmands across the border.

The big battles were affairs of a day only; the mobile column would come out from Peshawar, fight a battle and then go back to quarters again. Handyside had to deal with the desperate few amongst the Mohmands who were always slipping across the border. I remember on one occasion, when I was visiting Abazai with an escort, finding Handyside alone on the road not far from Shabkadr. I went up to him in amazement and enquired what he was doing there? His reply was, 'Go away.' As I refused to go and told him that he could not be left by himself in a country so hostile, he had finally to explain that two days previously he had had a small fight in that very locality with some Mohmands and they had captured one of his men. The same night they sent in word to say that the man would be released if Handyside came out to this very spot alone and took him over. If Handyside did not come alone, or did not come at all, the prisoner would have his throat cut. 'And that,' said Handyside, 'is the reason why I must ask you and your men to ride away at once. The Mohmands will think that I am laying a trap for them.' So I and my escort rode away. Late that afternoon Handyside came into Shabkadr, where I was, with the released man and apologised for being rude.

He died as one would have expected. He fell in a fight with a gang of Mohmand dacoits.

Sir Charles Tegart made his name in dealing with a class of criminal and outlaw different from that which confronted men like Warburton and Handyside. The last two were officers who were faced particularly by difficulties created by out-of-door outlaws.

Sir Charles Tegart was a city policeman, and the men with whom he had to deal were conspirators. As Commissioner of Police in Calcutta at a time when the Terrorists were most active, it was his business to discover and overthrow their plans and above all to see that high officials were able to carry on their work without fear of being shot or stabbed. What added to Tegart's difficulties was the fact that he himself was the high official the Terrorists were most anxious to assassinate. I think I am correct in saying that more than half a dozen direct attempts were made on his life. One of the most daring was made in a very busy street in Calcutta in broad daylight and both bombs and revolvers were used. When Tegart escaped that time the Terrorists said that the man must have a guardian angel. The only guardian angels he had were his own quickness, courage and resourcefulness. These qualities of his enabled him to lay bare one conspiracy after another; to catch the perpetrators of assassination and to put away in gaol men who would certainly have committed murders had they been left at large.

The success which Tegart had in his battle against Terrorism led to the circulation of many stories about him. I do not know how far these stories are true, because Tegart himself is a man of much modesty and does not encourage the telling of tales about himself. I think I must tell one though, which is not without some humour. As Tegart was famous for his uncanny knowledge of the methods used by Terrorists and conspirators, he was employed towards the end of the war, and after it, in dealing with the Bolshevik propaganda in England. It happened that a great friend of his called at the India Office and asked for his address or the address of his office. The clerk whom this friend saw said: 'Goodness gracious! We can't give you Tegart's address, or the address of his office, because he is engaged on very secret and dangerous work.' The friend was leaving the India Office greatly disappointed when a man came up to him and said that he had overheard what had passed and could give him the address he wanted. He gave it, mentioning a very tumble-down locality somewhere on the other side of the river. The friend called there. There seemed to be nobody in the house but he pushed at the bell till the door opened. It was opened by Sir Charles himself, who also exclaimed, 'Goodness gracious. How on earth did you find me?' When told how it was done, all that Sir



Charles said was: 'I thought my address was only known to two people. Apparently it is known to any hanger-on about the India Office.'

One could tell a lot of stories about the gallant deeds and resource of Indian police officers, but I do not want to repeat stories that have already been told, and some of the others are rather too personal, I think. In matters of this kind one has to rely a great deal on what one hears at clubs and over dinner-tables; the police officers do not tell. The result is that sometimes one may get the facts wrong, and then there is always discussion and trouble.

This reluctance to talk about their own exploits is an extraordinary characteristic of police officers. Their lives are romantic enough, but if they do not mention the things they do and experience, naturally the world at large passes them by. I know there is such a thing as an annual police report in every province, and I suppose one could dig facts out of it; but the dull prosaic language in which official reports are made do not encourage research work.

There is one aspect of police work in India which cannot be overlooked. The police have to suppress riots, for the most part arising out of religious disputes. Very often it happens that the mobs which are fighting each other turn upon the police. Then there is firing. Some of the mob are killed. Thereafter the police very often get into bad odour with

the Government. But what are they to do? It is always a case of a few men against numbers. Naturally, when a few men are faced by hundreds they must rely upon firearms. To say, as I have heard it said, that if a mob is only armed with sticks and staves and stones, the police should be able to deal with them with similar weapons, is absurd. Here again, the qualities of the police officer, as opposed to those of the police constable, may influence a situation a great deal. I have noticed very often that when firing has taken place, it is because the senior man present is not a police officer but a man of lower rank. When the officer is present his manner and bearing, and his words, maybe, are often sufficient to keep mobs from rushing at each other. But I will revert to this matter later, when writing of racial antagonisms in India and the queer way in which they sometimes manifest themselves.

## UNFAMILIAR SPIRITS

Reference was made in a foregoing chapter to Fatchpur Sikri, that deserted city of the Moghals. It was deserted by an order of an Emperor who was told by an astrologer that if he stayed there he would be overtaken by a mortal sickness. Another story is that the Emperor's son died there. Whatever it was, the order came that this accursed city must be evacuated at once. The Court led the way, but a large armed escort was left behind to see that nobody stayed. Everybody was driven out. Fatchpur Sikri still stands, and many of the great buildings are almost intact.

Tourists make a regular habit of visiting the empty town. There are guides to be had, and they will tell you all kinds of stories. I do not know if they are true, but this is true, that as the day wears on the guides become uneasy: they have no wish to be found in the city after dark. It may be that in some of the old tombs and rooms a few gipsy families dwell. But they are not in evidence. After dark they burn no lights, and should some visitor

stay after the sun has set he will find himself in a weird and exciting atmosphere. The guides say, and all the peasantry in the surrounding country also say, that once the humans have gone the city is peopled again by those who used to inhabit it. These ghosts are not shadowy ghosts, it is added they have an actual bodily presence, and if a man had the courage to look at them he would find them real men and women in the sense that they are able to repeat all the activities of men and women of to-day. They have feasts, and the Court is held again, and the Emperor delivers judgment; good men are rewarded and criminals punished, and in brief during the night the life of Fatehpur Sikri goes on just as it did in the days of long ago.

One tourist, whom I personally know to be a man of exceptional courage – he won a decoration for bravery during the war – told me that when making a tour of places of interest in India he went to Fatehpur Sikri. The hour was late, but because his time was short and he had to catch a train he went to the deserted town without a guide. He was warned about the ghosts, but he laughed at the idea. The sun was setting when he entered the great gate of victory, but there was still an hour or nearly an hour of daylight left. He wandered about, looking at palaces and various imposing ruins, and duly

admired them, but presently he was conscious of a feeling of uneasiness as if he were being followed. He shook off the feeling, but as it began to grow on him he thought to himself that he would pay a final visit to an imposing tomb near which he had wandered and then leave the deserted city. He went up to the tomb, climbed up on to a plinth and then found he was looking into a deep hole. Determined to explore further, he laid himself down on the tomb and peered through the hole. He thought he saw, below him, seven or eight graves. While he was still looking at them something very soft and feathery brushed his cheek, and then apparently vanished. He turned sharply round – and he admits that he could hear his heart beating very rapidly – and he saw what appeared to be a great white owl fluttering away in the distance. But that shock was enough for him; he got up and walked very rapidly out of Fatehpur Sikri, and all the time he was conscious that not one awesome being but a whole host was following him to see that he was safely out of the way.

There is another deserted city in India. That is the deserted city of Gaur. It does not lie in sandy or barren soil, and therefore has hardly been preserved in the condition that Fatehpur Sikri still is. Gaur was built amidst the forest and in the humid climate of Bengal; and after it was deserted the forest

proceeded to tear it to pieces. Sand preserves buildings; vegetation destroys them. When the inhabitants had left Gaur vegetable matter grew amongst the crevices of the bricks, grass covered the courtyards and the streets, the masonry of the big buildings was torn apart, and to-day there are no buildings in Gaur which can be called complete. The forest has seen to that. And another spoiler has been at work, too; what man built man has been busy destroying. I do not think man set to work until about a hundred years ago or perhaps even less than that; for there are people living in the vicinity who will tell you that they can remember big boats and barges being brought up the river on which Gaur was built by men whose purpose it was to pull down the city and take the bricks away. It was found easier to use the old bricks than to manufacture new bricks, but in spite of the spoliation and the destruction wrought by climate and vegetation, enough remains of Gaur to show that at one time it was a truly noble city. Some archways and portions of palaces are left, and they form parts of what was very obviously a magnificent design. The earliest European travellers to India have referred to Gaur, but I cannot find a single case in which one visited the city. Gaur had been abandoned, I believe, before the Portuguese came to India. These earlier travellers had heard about it,

and they merely repeated tales which were told them about a city already dead.

But one has not to go far in India to seek the ruined cities. There are seven ruined cities round Delhi itself, and every one represents the fall of a dynasty. I do not think there are any means of preserving the ruins that are scattered round the capital. Many are too far gone and many represent merely the houses of the common people. There is cultivation all round them and in between them, and some of the ruins are still inhabited. There are others that are habitable, and side by side with them one sees the huts and hovels of agricultural labourers and others. If one were to ask such people why they do not make use of a building which only needs a roof to make it habitable, instead of going to the expense of building new huts for themselves, they make the reply that these old buildings are haunted, not by ghosts, but by snakes. I remember a man who was sceptical about these snakes in old buildings, and he went out to explore one day. When he returned he was a bit shaken, for the very first deserted building he entered contained a couple of cobras. Old and deserted buildings are too often inhabited by the deadlier kind of snake, the cobra and Russell's viper.

The enquiry might be made why Delhi should have been the capital of seven different Empires.

I do not know. Nobody knows. I once asked a man versed in strategy what the strategical value of Delhi was in the old days before roads and railways were built. He thought for a while, and then he said that he did not know. And yet it is to the centre that great kings and princes always directed their steps. The plains of Panipat, on the edge of which Delhi stands, have been the scene of three of the greatest battles ever fought in India, and, if we count the siege of Delhi during the Mutiny, four battles have been fought there. Of these struggles the one that left the greatest impression on Delhi is the one in fact which the people in the locality have never forgotten, is the one that succeeded the capture of the city by Nadir Shah, that Persian shepherd who became such a terrible figure in Middle Asia and Northern India. The battle itself was terrible, but what shocked and frightened the inhabitants of the Punjab was the massacre that followed a few days after the Persian had entered the city. They say that the city had capitulated as soon as the army was defeated; Nadir Shah entered and was received with due humility. He had been three days in Delhi, gloating over the treasures he had found in the palaces of the Moghals when, one morning, some of his captains came to him and said that certain of the inhabitants of Delhi were being rude and aggressive. What should he



done? Nadir Shah replied, though one does not know whether it was in haste or what it was: 'Slay them all.' That order was taken literally, and a slaughter began and was continued on a scale comparable only to those that took place in the days when the Huns were ravaging the world. They say that four or five hundred thousand people of both sexes and all ages were put to death in the course of the week during which the slaughter continued. Then, horrified, let us hope, at what had happened, Nadir Shah, instead of continuing his march further into India, decided to return to his own country; but before he went he caused to be loaded upon camels and into carts all the treasure of the Moghals. It is recorded that the train that followed him extended for many miles, but so strong was the discipline of the troops that no one dared to touch even the feather of a peacock. All the treasure belonged to Nadir Shah.

The reference to the peacock's feather has reminded me of the peacock throne, which was believed to represent the finest and most precious throne that had ever been built. It was encrusted with jewels. That throne disappeared with the rest of the treasure when Nadir Shah died in the course of his march back to his own country. The throne had been exhibited at Kabul. Thereafter it was never heard of. My own idea is that when

Nadir Shah died the throne was looted by his troops, with the rest of the treasure. Very many years afterwards, people began to say that the peacock throne was to be seen in the treasure-house of the Shah of Persia. When an enquiry was made, Persian officials said: 'Yes, indeed, this is the very peacock throne of the Moghals that was brought away by Nadir Shah.' But it was proved that the officials were either mistaken or were not telling the truth. Again we come up against the figure of Lord Curzon. It was he who inspected the throne that the Persians had and, comparing what he saw with the description of the real peacock throne which had been described by European jewellers who had visited the Moghal Courts, found that there was no similarity of any kind. The throne in the Persian treasury had not even the quality of being valuable.

It is queer the attraction that Delhi had not only for Oriental conquerors and Oriental sovereigns, but has for the British also. It has a strategical value to-day because it is the centre of a big railway system. But that was hardly the reason which induced the Government to change the capital from Calcutta to Delhi. No, there was something else — some kind of lure, the nature of which it is impossible to discover. There is a proverbial saying among Indians which is so common that even

tourists and newcomers learn to quote it: 'Abi Dilli dur hai,' which means that Delhi is still far away. It is said to, and of, people who have great ambitions, the idea being, I think, to discourage them. But it also implies a sort of feeling that Delhi is the very centre of all things that are desirable and necessary. If you have Delhi, you have everything. Delhi represents the heart of the Mother.

Apart from ruined cities, India is dotted with the ruins of British settlements and camps. The British were always building stations and then abandoning them. Anyone who travels about the country and penetrates the jungles will come upon these lonely stations; the barracks are still there, at least so much of them as has not been eaten up by vegetation or destroyed for the sake of the bricks; and on one occasion I found a church almost in a complete state of preservation. The brick-stealers had not the courage to lay hands on the church.

Even more pathetic than the isolated stations are the isolated British graveyards and graves. Whether it was something in the cement used in the making of the graves or whether there have always been some people in the locality who are prepared to look after them, the graves very often are in a complete state of preservation. The majority of the lonely graves consists of the graves of soldiers who have died in battle. None of the English

graves is, in the minds of the local inhabitants, connected with any kind of ghost story. In fact, I have never heard a real ghost story from an Indian, for Indian ghosts are not those of beings who were once human. They are supernatural beings from the start, and if you are told that such and such a house is haunted, you may take it that the story originated with Europeans or at least Christians. (I have not forgotten what I said about Fatehpur Sikri. I almost had, but the Fatehpur Sikri ghosts are not the ghosts so much of individuals as of the population of the city as a whole. They have human forms but symbolise a condition or a state of activity.) They will tell you in Calcutta of the ghost of Warren Hastings, and how it drives in state down the roads of Alipore. There are one or two other haunted houses in Calcutta, but I, who took a great interest in these matters, never on any occasion found the legends repeated about them in any mouths except those of Europeans.

The real Indian ghost which is often responsible for the desertion of a house and sometimes even of a village is the Churel. This terrible word sends a shudder through the frames of most of the uneducated classes of Indian. It is the ghost of a woman, who has changed her shape after death. She is full of the most deadly animosity against all men. She is covered with hair, has the ears of an ape, and,

above all, her toes are two or three feet in length. She has no power at all during the day, but when dusk comes, the Churel lies along the boughs of a tree, overhanging a path. Should any human being be unfortunate enough to pass under the tree, those prehensile toes are stretched out. They grip the human by the neck and throttle him or her. The victim is then drawn up to the bough of the tree, and there devoured. On many occasions when I have been told about the Churel, I have made an opportunity of going to see the tree on which the spirit was supposed to dwell. As I have said, during daylight the Churel is powerless, and I found that villagers were always quite eager to show me the tree; children would come with them and sometimes one or two would climb the tree and make jokes about the Churel; if they did so they were rebuked for doing this. Some elderly villager would say: 'You wait till dark, my lad; let us see whether you will make jokes then.' But I could never get anybody to come to the tree after dark, and I must say that I myself when under the tree had a feeling of uneasiness and doubt, as if something very malignant really dwelt there. It might have been imagination, but I could never, even if I tried, recapture that feeling of uneasiness by standing under any other tree.

There are two special localities in India which

are said to be haunted by ghosts and evil spirits. One is near Waltair. I have never visited it, so in this instance can only speak about what I have heard. This is a region of tumbled rock, great rocks at the base of which rivulets of water flow. Sadhus resort there, in order to obtain hints about the methods necessary to acquire magical powers. The other spot I know well: I was seven or eight months in the locality, camped with a regiment pending demobilisation.

We were not working too hard, and almost every afternoon I could get away and wander in that enchanted spot. The region lies between Rawalpindi and a place called Chaklala. All the surrounding country is broken up into miniature mountains; that is to say, the earth is deeply scored by ravines through which the river Leh and its tributary streams flow. I remember one spot especially on the road, above a marsh which often contains snipe, appealing to me particularly as suitable for the display of magic arts. I do not know how I got the idea, but I was amazed and pleased one afternoon when I found that this very spot, and no other, had been selected by a woman to practise some special ceremony. She was so engaged in magical rites that she did not notice me standing only a few yards away. More extraordinary was the fact that she did not even notice my dog, which

went up to her and smelt curiously at her feet. She had a lighted lamp in one hand and in the other a vessel containing some kind of liquid, which she poured upon the ground, at the same time muttering in a very high voice some sort of incantation. Her enunciation was slow and clear, but I did not know what language she was using. After the incantation was over, she stood in an extraordinary attitude with both her hands pointing to heaven for several minutes, during which time she remained absolutely silent. Then she got up and went away. The lamp was not out, and, as she passed within a few feet of me, it seemed to me that her eyes were closed, and that she was in some kind of hypnotic state.

Some people now are bound to ask why, if she was sleep-walking or in a trance, was it necessary for her to have a lamp. In India, after dark, everybody is supposed to have a lamp, even the blind; and if you ask a blind man what use the lamp or lantern is to him, he will reply: 'O fool, the lamp is not for my benefit, but for yours, lest you stumble against me in the dark.' I think in the case of the woman the lamp was for the purpose of warning people who were passing by that an incantation was in progress, and they were not to blunder in or interfere.

In 1936 a new kind of ghost or spirit appeared in

India and caused the greatest excitement in the country. This spirit was eighteen feet or more high, and it left footprints several feet long which cut into the earth two or three inches. This giant was first seen in Sikkim. He then came down the hill to Jalpaiguri; next he wandered all over Northern Bengal; and when I last heard of him he had been even seen in Cochin, still leaving enormous footprints. It was said that those who saw him died on the spot. And yet he was not an evil spirit; he was a good spirit; so good indeed that the sight of him was too much for the ordinary sinner; but if his presence was to be avoided the footprints were very useful things to see. The sight of them cured all maladies. In fact, even a sketch of the footprints healed the sick. I doubt not that in due course the places where the footprints are alleged to exist will have shrines built over them.

And here is a strange story. A good many years ago, three or four Tibetan priests came down from the hills into the Meerut district. They levied tribute all over the district, threatening that if money was not paid to them they would give the villagers the most fearsome nightmares. Sometimes villagers would refuse, because a Tibetan lama is not considered a particularly dreadful person in India, where Lamaism is often confused with Buddhism, which is a soft and gentle religion,



the disciples of which would never dream of levying blackmail. Well, when they were refused money, the lamas would take up their position a little distance outside the village, and after dark would begin to blow on their trumpets. These trumpets are not like ordinary trumpets. They are made of human thighbones, and the sounds that can be produced from them are awful and terrifying as I can testify, for I have often heard them myself. The villagers who heard these sounds would lie terrified all through the night. Next morning they would be willing to pay. These musical invaders were finally ordered to go back to their own country.

Though I never got any nightmares after hearing the trumpets, I read a strange thing in a book of travel only recently. The traveller was somewhere in Eastern Turkestan, and he records that he was sleeping on the roof of a hut in a Turki city at night. Several times he woke up shaking with horror and fear. He did not know or did not remember quite what the awful nightmare was that had so shaken him, but he well remembers how the whole of his body was covered with perspiration. Next morning he was told by his host that some Tibetan lamas a few doors away had been blowing on their thighbone trumpets.

## ABORIGINALS

When writing about the Aryan conquest of India I mentioned the tribes called Monkeys and Bears who assisted Rama on his march towards Ceylon. I think that the people who wrote the epic had in mind the Aborigines of Chota Nagpur and the Central Provinces. Anthropologists have written a great deal about these tribes and traced the similarity of their habits and customs with those of primitive tribes in other parts of the world. I was brought up to believe that most of the tribes in the regions which I have mentioned were clans and sections of one great tribe called the Ho. Two of these sections are now known as Santhals and Oraons, and there are about five others, having a more or less similar civilisation, but not a similar language.

Santhals provide the Assam tea gardens with a great deal of their labour. They are the finest of the Aboriginal tribes, and planters are pleased when they can get hold of them. The Oraons are good too, though in a lesser degree. But some of the others are not to be trusted at all. That is to say,

they are lazy and quarrelsome and given to drink. A Santhal has one magnificent quality, he cannot tell a lie. This fact has been noticed by everybody who has come in contact with the tribe. There is a proverbial saying in India about the truthfulness of a Santhal. One thing only I can hold against them, and that is, wherever they go they slaughter all the game within reach. In their own country, sometimes, the Santhals organise a drive, which often consists of a thousand men or more with their nets, spears and bows and arrows and dogs. The drive may continue for several days, and while it is in progress every beast or bird that comes in the way is killed. A grinning Punjabi once said to me: 'These people will even net butterflies and eat them when a drive is in progress.' Sometimes there are terrific rows when a tank (a sheet of water, like a small lake) lies in the way of a drive. Tanks in that part of the world have been dug out at much cost and stocked with fish which are carefully preserved; but the Santhal says that it is his right to take anything that comes in his way during a drive. So he nets all the fish in the tank, and if the rajah's men or the zemindar's men attempt to interfere, there is a clash. Santhals are a bit hasty tempered and men are often wounded or slain in the quarrel. The tank is dragged, and if any fish escape, they are lucky.

This idea that game is the perquisite of this or that tribe is carried to some extreme length amongst certain tribes. I remember a retired officer at Conoor who kept a tame python, of which he was very proud; certain Aborigines came past the bungalow one day when the colonel was out, peeped over the hedge, saw the python lying on a rock and promptly carried it off; notwithstanding the protest of the servant. The colonel was naturally very angry when he returned home and found his python gone. He hurried off in the direction that the Aborigines had taken but found he was too late. He found their camp, but the python had already been cooked and eaten.

By the term Aboriginal, I mean those races in India that were in India before the Aryans came, and who were not admitted into the pale of Hinduism. It cannot be said that they are lower than the lowest castes: they just profess a religion which is not Hinduism. They are animists: that is to say, they worship Nature in all its manifestations. They have sacred groves, sacred trees, sacred animals, and they invest clouds and the wind with life. This simple and childlike outlook is marred in the case of certain tribes by the belief that sacrifices, even human sacrifices, are sometimes necessary, a practice, of course, that has been stopped by the Indian Government. But every now and then some officials in a

district inhabited by Aborigines are startled by the report that on such and such a day a human being will be sacrificed on such and such a hill. Official machinery is at once set in motion; other people beside Aborigines hasten to the hill, and by the time that the preliminary ceremonies are over the worshippers find that the police are in possession of their high altar. So no open and public human sacrifice is possible to-day, though sometimes a few men may, in haste, kill another before a shrine. But the Aborigines admit sadly that such a hurried affair is not the real thing and cannot possibly have the same effect.

There is a system in vogue in the parts inhabited by the Aboriginal tribe of which we are speaking which is not very far removed from slavery. It is known as the *kumia* system. The men of these tribes are very reckless and extravagant; they soon get into debt, particularly in connection with festivities that are considered necessary when a marriage is celebrated; and, in fact, it is considered rather a reproach to a man whose daughter is being married if he does not get into debt for the occasion. The interest on these debts is so heavy that very few men are able to pay it. They then go to the money-lender and say: 'I am your *kumia*,' which means that the man has finally decided that he cannot pay any more and is prepared to sign himself and his

family on as slaves to the money-lender concerned. The kumia then works for the money-lender as a servant or field labourer. He is paid two rupees a month and given one piece of cloth every two years. Serving at that low rate of pay means that he can never hope to pay off his debts; neither he nor his children; but this system has helped the tea industry a good deal. I do not think the practice still prevails, but in the older days coolie-contractors, as they were called, used to go to the money-lender and say: 'How much does this man owe you?' Then they would pay the money-lender whatever the man owed and send the latter off to a tea garden where he worked as an indentured coolie.

The Aboriginal did not mind, because he was paid good wages, worked lighter hours, and was no longer a slave. At the end of his indenture he could, if he liked, go back to his own country and with his savings start as a free-born farmer again. The indenture system is now at an end; chiefly, I think, because wrong words were used about it. People spoke of 'buying' coolies for the tea garden, but all that was meant was that a certain sum was paid to the contractor, who had, on his part, bought off the coolie's debts. Many coolies found life in Assam so pleasant, and in a way so similar to life in their own country, that they settled down in the

vicinity of tea gardens, where they either cultivated the land or hired themselves out as free labourers.

Curiously enough, there is a kind of affinity between the wild tribes that inhabit the frontiers of Assam and the coolies that have been brought in to the province from Chota Nagpur and elsewhere in the middle of India. The border tribes are animists like the Aborigines; there is, therefore, a similarity in religion, and in manners and customs. But there is no racial affinity; scientists have tried to trace a physical affinity but have failed to do so. The languages employed, too, are very different, so that any affinity that exists must be due more to environment than to anything else. Simple and childlike people, brought up in the forest, have grown up in the same way.

The Aboriginal tribes of Assam are the Kasias, the Lushais, the Nagas who belong to Assam itself. The most important border tribes are the Daflas, the Abors and the Mishmis. The Kasias are very rapidly becoming civilised. They are people of a Mongolian type, simple and hearty. Everybody who has come into contact with them likes them. The Lushais and Nagas seem to be less amenable to the arts of civilisation. Yet there is about them a wholesomeness and virility which makes many Europeans hope that they will never lose their simple habits and customs.

At one time, both Nagas and Lushais were always coming out of the hills into the valleys, plundering and killing. They cannot do so now because they are surrounded by British territories and any raid is severely punished. One Lushai raid in particular created a great deal of excitement, because the raiders carried off the daughter of a planter. Her name was Mary Winchester. There was a long delay before an expedition could be organised to rescue her, but finally she was found and brought home again. She was only eight years of age when captured and when about eight or ten months later she was brought back it was found that she had assimilated in a remarkable degree all kinds of instincts and activities from her captors; they had not ill-treated her, and afterwards she often said that she would not mind going back to her wild and unrestrained life in a Lushai village. The Victorian mistresses were shocked at the way in which she capered about in the school to which she was sent, jumping over hedges and climbing in and out of windows.

I was told about one feat of hers. In order to prevent her climbing out of windows at night, a mistress was set to watch a certain window and be ready to run downstairs and catch her in the act if she were found crawling down by means of a pipe or a creeper. The mistress nodded and went



to sleep; when she awoke the window was open and Mary Winchester was seen leaping about the lawn like a March hare. The mistress found that while she was asleep Mary had crept up to her and taken off, not only her shoes, but her stockings, so that she could not run out across an expanse of gravel on to the lawn after her. Asked afterwards how she had managed to get the shoes and stockings off without waking the sleeping mistress, the girl said that she had breathed softly upon each portion of the leg and foot as it became exposed to the air. That was to prevent the skin being chilled; as for the rest it was merely a question of deftness of touch.

Of the three great tribes on the Assam frontier perhaps the Daflas are the most original. They wear artificial tails and claim to be descended from monkeys. They often come down from the hills and visit tea gardens, but generally not with any evil intent. A planter told me that a troop of Daflas came to see him regularly every year. They never wanted money or presents, though they did not mind picking up something out of his vegetable garden. They would chaff the coolies, or something like chaff passed between them and the coolies, for there would be laughter and gestures; as a rule neither side knew what the other was saying, of course, though one or two coolies had picked up a bit of the Daila language.

Backward races are very quick at picking up backward languages. On one occasion the planter said to the Daflas, through one of his coolies, that they were fond of saying that the Daflas were descended from apes; if this was so, why did they not behave like apes? When this was translated to them there were shrieks of laughter. Some men began to scratch themselves, others rushed to the nearest tree and swung themselves from the branches, a third party turned over large stones searching for insects and beetles which they popped into their mouths. They were so pleased with the pantomime that they continued this game for hours, until the planter got tired of watching it and went away. Thereafter there were ape-like games every time the Daflas came down from the hills to the tea garden.

Of all the Assam frontier tribes, the Abors are the most dangerous. They have a very primitive civilisation and they are more intent than any of the surrounding tribes to keep foreigners out of their country. A few years before the war three Europeans who crossed the frontier without permission from the Indian Government were killed, although they had a Gurkha escort with them. Most of the Gurkhas were also killed. An expedition followed, naturally, which destroyed two or three of the villages, but was not able to penetrate very far into the country, because of the physical difficulties

which it presented. It is to be noted that Nagas and Lushais came forward quite willingly to act as porters for this expedition against the Abors, who have a dreadful name all through Assam. And here is a strange fact. An officer with that expedition took several dogs, trained in England to distinguish between friend and foe, to assist sentries. This intelligent foresight was acclaimed, because it was an Abor habit to stalk sentries at night and shoot them down with arrows; but although the dogs were very highly trained they were totally unable to distinguish between Abors and the coolies of the expedition. This reminds me of an attempt to make use of similar dogs in Mesopotamia in the trenches; this too was a failure, for the dogs would stand guard over a pile of rifles and would allow British soldiers to approach the rifles but not sepoys. As they were brought out by a sepoy officer they were of precious little use to his regiment.

The Mishmis we seem to know least about; but it is certain that they are not as savage as the Abors. British officers have traversed their country, and have not met with a hostile reception. It is stated that the Chinese are steadily penetrating Mishmi land from the other side; not merely establishing military posts, but actually taking up and cultivating the land.

But all the country inhabited by the Assam frontier tribes is very densely wooded. There are no roads, and the tracks that exist have to be hewn out of the jungle every year; the country is covered with dense bamboo forests; where the effort of hacking a way through them is laborious in the extreme. Curiously enough such cultivation as exists occurs in a clearing made with great labour in the middle of the forest, not in the few open glades and pastures that exist. It may be that this cultivation is purposely kept hidden inside a belt of trees. The fierce frontier people always fear that an invader would be more ruthless than themselves. That is possibly why they leave the glades and open parts to the Tarkin and the Tsine.

The Tarkin is a strange animal which is partly a pig, partly a buffalo, and partly a goat. They had a Tarkin in Regent's Park which had been presented to King George V by Nepal. I went to see the poor beast once and found that it had been placed in a cage which had little shade. It seemed to have been classed amongst the animals of the higher Himalayas; as a matter of fact the Tarkin prefers the valleys, and the dense moist jungles that are to be found in them. I do not know whether Regent's Park has ever possessed a Tsine.

A Tsine is only a wild bull. I say 'only,' but it is the most objectionable kind of bull one can imagine.

It charges anybody on sight, in the manner of the so-called white rhinoceros of Africa, but the rhinoceros is short-sighted and charges blindly. The Tsine, on the other hand, is a keen-sighted and clever animal. Hunters cannot shoot him as easily as they seem to do the white rhinoceros: the only way he can be bagged is by means of a stealthy stalk: he must be taken unawares. I do not know of any Tsine in captivity.

This animal, however, is rather scarce on the frontiers of which I have been talking. His real home is on the Burma side. The Shans know him well and so do the Siamese, but I will write of the animal in a later chapter.

Let us turn to the Shans; they can be numbered amongst the peoples of India in spite of the new, and I might add ridiculous, arrangement which is going to make Burma independent of India. The Shans are Mongolian in origin, though they have no direct association with the Burmese races; they have an independent civilisation and are a much more energetic people than the Burmese or any of the Aboriginal tribes I have mentioned. They are Aborigines of a kind themselves and are being hard pressed at the present moment by encroaching Chinese, who are coming upon them from both sides. Chinese settlers are working their way up into the Shan hills from Burma. Simular settlers

in larger and more aggressive numbers are coming in from the Chinese side and settling on Shan land without asking permission from anybody; many of these settlers are well armed, being ex-soldiers of one provincial army or another, and are quite prepared, when they want land, to take it by force. I do not think any of these Chinese settlers are yet actually in territory which is definitely under British control, but they are into no-man's land and I have no doubt that the Burmese Government, whether controlled by India or not, will soon have to face the problem of how to keep the Chinese away.

During the war an attempt was made to enlist Shans for the army, but it met with failure. Members of smaller tribes and clans on the Burmese frontier came forward to enlist, and some of the regiments thus formed did service in Mesopotamia, but these units were disbanded as soon as the war was over. Incidentally, the Burmese regiments that were formed at the same time, against the advice of some people who claimed to know the country, did very well indeed, and two or three regiments, instead of being demobilised after the war, were kept permanently on the army list.

I have rather kept away from the subject of the Aboriginal tribes in Southern India, where they are more numerous even than in Chota Nagpur; but I do not know Southern India very well, and can

only speak of these tribes at second hand. I know a little about the Gonds, sufficient to assert that they are the finest trackers and hunters in India, resembling in many ways the Aborigines of Australia. And they can live on anything. This reminds me of a Gond tracker I had; the man at a pinch could live on insects. I am certain of that because of the many different crawling and creeping things that he was always broiling on a fire. Sometimes when there was no fire he would eat the insects raw. My cook used to make piles of chapatis (flat, thin biscuits made from flour) for him every morning. One morning when I asked him if he had had his breakfast, his reply was: 'What breakfasts for me? Sometimes I find a wild plum, that is my breakfast.' The peculiar meals he ate seemed to make no difference to his activity. He never seemed to sleep and was always circling behind and in front (like a dog) when on the march.

I have visited a Veddah encampment in the Nilgiris. It was rather disappointing in a way because the elders of the tribe were out on some mission of their own, and the younger men were not inclined to let me see the strange shrines that these people erect inside caves which they dig for the purpose. The Nilgiri Veddahs have long been a mystery to ethnologists and others; they resemble in every way the Veddahs of Ceylon, but how they

came to be isolated in the Nilgiris nobody knows. Those that I saw seemed to be rather sleepy people compared with the Aborigines of Chota Nagpur, or other parts of India, and I got the notion that they had taken to opium or some other drug.

It is to be noted that the drug habit has not as a whole extended to people in the lower stages of civilisation in India; it seems to attract people of a better caste. The Aborigines, however, are very fond of intoxicating drinks. Though I am all for freedom, and object as much to Dora as to her equally abominable sister Mrs. Grundy – as the Mayor of a popular resort so aptly put it. – I am all for controlling the amount of drink that some of the Aboriginal tribes should obtain.



## GREAT SNAKES

The following story was told me by an officer who had served in Burma. He was engaged in semi-military duties and was at the time visiting, with an escort, a series of Karen villages, which had recently elected a king of their own and had been giving a lot of trouble in consequence. But after the king was captured and secluded for a while the villagers promised to behave, and the visits he was paying were for the purpose of showing the flag and assuring the Karens that the Government had no designs against them and hoping that they would not cause any further disturbances. None of the villages which he had visited showed any signs of hostility and the head man said that as long as the Government treated them well there could not be any trouble. But on arriving at the path which led to a certain village the interpreter who was with the party halted and pointed to a collection of sticks and stones arranged in an unusual way in the middle of the path. 'I do not like that,' he said to the officer, and asked that the whole column should be halted.

Carefully studying the ground, he declared that the meaning of the sign built by the villagers was, 'This road is very dangerous to you. Don't use it.'

Naturally, the officer was annoyed. He had noticed that there was another path to the village a mile or so further back and accordingly he sent an Indian officer and half the escort back to the head of the other path, and told them to find out if there were any signs of that path being blocked also; if so they were to send back word and some arrangements would be made to counter the Karens. The officer could see this second party when it reached the point where the other path started, and through his glasses he noticed that it was there met by a few villagers; much excited talking ensued. The party had a heliograph section of signallers with them, and presently the following message came through: 'Please do not move up that path. It is very dangerous. Letter follows.' That is a favourite Indian dodge, 'Letter follows.' The Indian officer with the party wrote what is known as the Nagri script which the British officer could read easily. Presently the letter came along, brought by a sepoy running as hard as he could. It declared, briefly, that the Indian officer was himself coming along to explain the meaning of the sign. And in due course that worthy appeared, breathing hard, for he was a

portly man. With him came several Karen villagers and the interpreter. This is what the interpreter said.

Some weeks before, a villager going down the path had been attacked by a hamadryad or king cobra and had died from the bite; subsequently two other men had been attacked passing down that way and had similarly died. The villagers could actually see the serpent when they crept up cautiously towards the field of corn in which it had taken up its abode. It was such a huge serpent that when it stood up its head was a foot above the corn. They could see its forked tongue darting in and out and the head turning from side to side. The sign had been put up to warn the sahib that there was some danger in going that way; they now hoped that the sahib, being aware that they lived in fear of their lives and were hampered in their comings and goings, would slay the serpent.

Obviously even a company of riflemen would find it hard to slay a serpent as agile as a hamadryad with rifle bullets, but it happened that the officer had with him a double-barrelled shotgun, and that, he was confident, was a weapon with which the hamadryad could be blown to pieces without too much risk; so he loaded the shotgun with No. 4 shot and proceeded cautiously in the direction indicated by the villagers. Sure enough, when he was nearly

twenty yards away from the field which had been pointed out to him, he became aware of a snake's head swaying above the corn, the forked tongue darting in and out and the head moving from side to side and evidently watching him. The closer he got the more forcibly it struck him that the snake might at any moment make a dart, and that he must be very quick with his gun. At last the moment came when he realised that he must now fire at the head, or be in danger of being bitten. He was raising the gun to his shoulder when he saw something which, as he said, sent a chill to his heart and brought great drops of perspiration to his brow; another hamadryad appeared a few feet away from the first, and now there were two heads hissing and leering at him. He had to make two good shots or his number was up. He had two cartridges of course; but that was all he had in the way of a defensive weapon. He said that the situation, which reduced him to a state of perfect terror, was yet so easily overruled by some secondary instinct he had, that he simply raised the gun to his shoulder and fired two shots, one after the other, bang – bang, as calmly as if he were shooting snipe: both the heads disappeared and the officer felt so relieved that he sat down immediately on the ground. He thinks he must have been unconscious for at least half a minute; by that time he was aware that many

Karens were around him and that people were coming, running up from the village. Both the snakes had been hit in the head and although the tails were swishing to and fro they were obviously dead. There was rejoicing in the village that night, and the British officer was hailed as a hero. His fame spread amongst the Karens, and there was no longer any question of sullen tribesmen making a peace which they did not like.

This is the only case of which I have heard in which two king cobras have been killed with a right and left, though it is generally known that these abominable and deadly creatures go about in pairs. In spite of very many excursions into jungles and forests haunted by the king cobra, I have only seen one, and this was in the Himalayas at a higher altitude than one would expect to find this serpent. I was seated on the slope of a hill on one side of which was a deodar forest: it was slippery with needles which had dropped from the trees. I heard a sort of swishing noise amongst the needles, and turning round to see what it could possibly be I saw something long and dark sliding along. The shikari who was with me cried out: 'Raj-nag,' but before I could reach for the shotgun at my side, the serpent came down the hill at a most terrific rate and passed us about twenty feet away.

We were able to watch it for quite a distance and

saw it cross a stream at the bottom of the hill and then slowly climb up to a rough wall that had been built round some crop. I sent one of my coolies down to the village to warn the village people. When he came back he said that the villagers told him to go away, because they said they did not believe any raj-nag was about. We had probably mistaken a rat snake for the king of snakes. I sent another man down to tell them that it really was a hamadryad and they had better be careful about it. More I could not do, and so I went on my way.

The king cobra, as I have just said, does go about in pairs, although in this case I only saw one. People in India who kill a hamadryad, or even an ordinary cobra, in their compounds should take good care not to allow anybody to trail the dead snake into the house; the mate will surely follow its smell. A resident in an outlying district of the United Provinces told me that on one occasion a young ass whom he had staying with him brought a dead hamadryad into the house, trailing it about through the veranda into the drawing-room. My informant took the snake away back to the spot where it had been killed by the servant and then laid a new trail away to a distant ditch into which he flung the body. His servant said: 'It is too late, the mate will surely follow the first trail, or it will

come back to the first trail and follow it. In any case you had better look out for it to-night.'

So my informant, after building a machan consisting of three chairs, one on top of the other, and placing a light which would shine on that part of the veranda along which the serpent had been trailed, sat up for the night with a shotgun in his hands. Nothing happened for some hours; then the watcher woke with a start for he felt something slimy touching his leg. He gave a yell and threw himself backward with the result that the whole contraption on which he was seated fell to pieces. Dropping the shotgun he ran for his life into his bedroom where he shut and bolted the door. The next morning he warned the servants very early about what had happened, and a party went to investigate. There were signs that the snake had indeed followed a trail up to the veranda and had then crossed the exact spot where the chairs had been tied together. Afterwards it had crossed a drain outside the veranda and gone into some dense growth. It was not seen again, but the occupants of the bungalow passed some very tense days and nights.

The average European in India never does see a hamadryad; they are comparatively rare creatures. I wish the same thing could be said of the cobra, which, though slower than the hamadryad in

striking, is still quick and venomous enough to be a very great menace. It is true that one will hear men who have been resident in India for several years declare that they have never seen a cobra; but all I can say is that they have been very lucky, because cobras are numerous in almost every part of India. They do not haunt bungalows, and perhaps a man who never ventures off the roads and never does any real walking may pass some years before he sees a cobra or even a snake of any kind; but I think that the average man, the man who golfs and shoots and goes riding into the jungle, even if he is not a shikari, must either see snakes or he must be half blind. I do not suppose I have ever gone out with a gun, whether after snipe or anything else, without seeing a snake or two. The bulk of these snakes must certainly have been harmless, grass snakes, rat snakes, tree snakes, and snakes of that class; but it is strange that a man should not see a snake in his own garden. Are there men who never go into their gardens?

Also there are two kinds of snakes that deliberately seem to enter houses and bungalows, these are the karait and the wolf snake. It happens that the wolf snake resembles the karait very closely, but it is non-poisonous. The karait, although not quite such a man-hater as the king cobra, is nevertheless a detestable and vicious reptile. It is always ready



to bite, and if it is not as deadly as the cobra, it is not because the poison is less deadly, but because the amount it can inject at a time is less. The wolf snake imitates the karait even to the extent of displaying the same bad temper; when annoyed or interfered with, it will hiss and bite. Many of the alleged cures from the bite of karait that we hear of are due to the fact that the bites have not been from a karait but from a wolf snake.

What about the alleged cures for snake-bites that one hears of all over India? In by far a greater number of cases the man who is stated to have been cured had not been bitten by a poisonous snake at all. Again, very often the snake may be an aged snake and have no poison in the poison sac; or the poison sac may have been emptied recently by the snake biting another animal a short time before. Some years before the war, the military authorities made a special investigation into the cases of snake-bites reported amongst the troops. It was found that a very small proportion of the bites reported had been made by poisonous snakes. As far as I remember the figures, in one year eighty-seven British soldiers had reported being bitten; only in three cases did investigation show that the bites were made by poisonous snakes. To-day, any trained medical officer, when told that a man has been bitten by a cobra or a karait, and has recovered as the

result of the administration of this nostrum or the other, refuses to believe that the cobra was a cobra or the karait was a karait.

I have known an instance in which a sepoy reported that he had been bitten in the back by a snake during the night. The man was obviously in very great pain, in fact he was almost paralysed. Investigation of his bedding showed, not a snake, but a scorpion, a big black scorpion. It is possible that the sting of a scorpion is often reported as a snake-bite, more particularly because of the symptoms it produces. I remember being stung by a scorpion of the pale yellow variety, supposed to be less dangerous than the black scorpion, and yet the agony I suffered cannot be described; but note this – the pain disappeared as suddenly as it had come. At one moment my leg was absolutely in torment, then suddenly the pain ceased; there was not even any throbbing. I think the fact that the pain from the poison ejected by a scorpion disappears on the instant, and in an extraordinary way, explains a lot of these alleged cures from snake-bites. The patient is evidently suffering; one remedy after another is applied. Suddenly the pain stops; the credit is given to the last remedy applied, however objectionable or ridiculous it may have been. One can say the same thing when the remedy has been applied to what is recognised as a scorpion's sting. There

are men who go about giving out that they can cure scorpions' stings by the process of pressing certain veins with their fingers. These men are not professional medicine men, but when somebody in the bazar has been bitten by a scorpion, they are sent for and go through their mumbo jumbo. In due course the pain ceases abruptly, the medicine man takes his fee, and goes away with added credit and renown. Some humbugs keep a collection of scorpions which they allow to wander all over them. Everybody is amazed except those who are aware that the stings have been removed from the scorpions. These stings grow again, and unless the miracle-worker is careful he may find himself in sore pain some day and forced to take some of his own medicine.

Those who have studied the structure and anatomy of snakes will tell you that they have no auditory organs and also no vocal cords; in other words, snakes are deaf and dumb. This I cannot believe. Surely snakes hear the voice of the snake-charmer; I know it is said that what a snake is dancing to is not the sound of the pipe but the movements of the charmer's head and hands; but that does not take into account the fact that the pipes the charmer uses are employed to draw snakes out of their holes by persons who want to catch or

kill them. I have seen charmers attract snakes out of their holes and there was no question of the snake hidden in the earth seeing the charmer; it *must* have heard him.

Then again, about the vocal cords, which the snake is supposed to lack. It may not have actual cords, but there is evidence to show that snakes, particularly cobras, can make a noise. Cobras scream when cornered, almost like cats. I have had several letters from very reliable observers on this subject. One said that a cobra cornered in an out-house screamed so like a cat, that he thought his dogs had cornered one. In another case a cobra got into a drain and found that both exits had been stopped; it then screamed until discovered.

Pythons utter loud sighs and moans. Often men camping in the jungle have heard these sounds and wondered what caused them, but I now believe that there can be no question but that pythons make them. I have had several letters in my time on the subject, and two of them came from men experienced in woodcraft, and both in responsible positions. One informant assured me that amongst the trackers he had employed in Southern India, the belief was general that the sound was made by pythons. On one occasion he heard loud sighing and a sort of sobbing outside his tent and a tracker called out that it was a python. Next morning the

tracks of a python were found in the exact spot from where the sound seemed to come. In the second case the observer actually tracked the animal by the sound it made to a spot in the jungle. It was a dark night and he set two or three men to watch the spot. Next morning a python was found there and the men captured and ate it.

But one cannot discuss snakes in India without arriving before long at the bis-cobra. Sometimes instead of bis they say bich and both words mean poison; but the cobra is already poisonous. What kind of animal is this that has earned the reputation of being doubly poisonous? Most Indians say that it is a very deadly kind of a lizard, but in any attempt to track the animal further by enquiring what kind of lizard, there comes confusion, for the description of the bis-cobra varies according to the part of India where it is found. I have heard this bis-cobra described as a kind of house lizard which calls 'tucktoo tucktoo' during the night. True, there certainly is a 'tucktoo' lizard, particularly common in Eastern Bengal, but it is quite harmless and the people there know that it is so. They say that the bis-cobra is a crested lizard which may be seen on walls and running about gardens. It is not often seen in Eastern Bengal, which may account for its being considered poisonous there. In the hotter and drier parts of India, bis-cobra is a term applied to the

grey, quick lizard, not often seen in those parts. But in whatever part of India you may be, you will find the peasantry insisting upon the existence of a bis-cobra and upon the deadliness of its bite. I have heard village people assert that the lizard does not bite but spits, and the smallest particle of spittle falling on anyone causes a hole to be made in the spot which it has touched. I remember one man assuring me that if the lizard spat at a tree, a hole would burn right through and the tree would die. This belief in the bis-cobra is difficult to eradicate, and a good many Europeans seem to have caught the superstition from their servants and others. Let me say at once that scientists are quite certain that there is only one poisonous lizard in the world, and it is not found in India, but in Arizona.

But the bis-cobra is not the only dangerous creature of this kind; there exists a belief in the existence of the basilisk, an animal which it is death merely to see. No name is given to it by those people who believe in its existence, because in India it is generally thought to be unlucky to name a Thing which is hostile and deadly. That is why a man will often not mention an enemy by name. The basilisk, if referred to, is generally called 'the Thing.' A man wrote to me once from Central India a letter in which he said that on one occasion when he was camping near a village a boy came running to him

crying out in great despair and anguish. He said, with much lamentation, that he had been working with his father in a field when his father suddenly cried out: 'Run, boy, run. I have seen the Thing.' The boy ran away, coming straight to the sahib, who went out at once to the spot which the boy pointed out. Nobody dared to follow him. On reaching the place the sahib found an elderly villager dead. There was an enquiry afterwards, and the medical report was that the man must have died of shock; there were no marks of any kind upon him. Obviously he had seen something. My own view is that what he had seen was one of those crested lizards which, like chameleons, have the power of altering the colour of the neck and back. I have seen these lizards change in colour while running along the wall, according to the colour of the wall, from brick red to green and yellow. A man who has never before seen this extraordinary creature, which, when its head is up and its crest erect, looks very fierce, might well believe, if suddenly coming across one, that he was looking at an incarnation of the devil.

Have you ever seen a mandril? It is a heavy monkey with a blue and red face. Suddenly seen peering out of some brushwood it looks exactly like the face of a devil. Of course this crested lizard is a tiny thing compared to a mandril, but seen head-on it looks even more evil than a mandril in his native

home. Ironically, it so happens that the crested lizard is perfectly harmless and is very amusing in the garden because of the sudden frights it gives to cats and dogs who attempt to chase it.

Prevalence in the belief of the bis-cobra and basilisk has led to the deaths of countless lizards. There is an animal called the goa-samp. It is merely a very large lizard, an iguana, but I have had one brought to me in the belief that it was a bis-cobra. Of recent years it has been killed in increasing numbers, not as a poisonous reptile but because it has been found that its skin is valuable. Shoes are made out of it, and the export from India of iguana skins has reached incredible dimensions, mostly bound for America. The iguanas are hunted with dogs or taken in traps, and they exist in apparently larger numbers than one would have believed. The average sportsman in the jungle will hardly ever see one, yet thousands seem to be caught in spots where one would not have expected any to exist. Iguanas seem to be found just as often in swamps as in dry, torrid parts; they vary in size according to locality, and of course to their age. The Government of Bengal has recently made it illegal to catch or kill iguanas below a certain size, but in India nobody pays any attention to laws of this kind, and skins of all sizes are sold openly in the bazars.

There is yet another deep-rooted belief bordering



on fantasy; this is the theory that somewhere in the swamps of the Brahmaputra there still exists a giant iguanodon, a relic of the past when 'monsters of the prime tare each other in the slime.' This giant iguanodon is quite possible to-day. The lizard does not seem to differ much in structure from that prehistoric beast; it is merely a question of size, and the lizards we see already range in size from six inches to six feet. Some triumphant sportsman may yet extract a 16-foot iguanodon from a swamp in Assam! I hope his story will be swallowed.

## CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

Snakes are common enough, as I have said, in India, and their existence adds a great terror to the life of the barefooted peasantry; but snakes are not the only enemies that attack people living in mud huts surrounded by fields. Not only are there scorpions everywhere in India, but in addition there is the centipede. There are two dangerous centipedes. I do not say an adult would die if bitten or scratched by one, but they are dangerous to children; and in any case people into whom they have injected their poison are in pain sometimes for weeks. There is a long, very thin red centipede which has a habit of getting into houses, and creeping in amongst clothes; and there is another type which looks very threatening and ugly. It is a fat thick centipede, striped black and yellow, or sometimes red and black; a scratch or a bite from one of these will raise a blister which often develops into a boil, a boil which may last for months if it is not properly treated. At one time there were people who airily went about saying that centipedes were quite harm-

less; but later investigation has shown, as I stated above, that they not only have poison fangs in their mouths, but poison sacs in their feet. Two pairs of feet generally have these sacs. The centipede is a great crawler by night, and this black and yellow edition is fond of climbing up the legs of beds, particularly in cases where people sleep out of doors. In certain parts of the Punjab no one would dream of sleeping out of doors without having the legs of his bed in pails of water.

Once, when I was in camp with troops, my servant found one of these red and black centipedes, about eight inches long, in my bed. He showed it to me with great triumph inside a pickle bottle where he had put it. He asked permission to take it to the military hospital, for he was under the impression that the doctor would pay him well for it. Did he not know, he said, of another case where a smaller specimen had brought the man who captured it ten rupees from a doctor? I told the man that I did not think he would get ten rupees or anything at all for a centipede. He replied confidently that it was a known fact that some very powerful medicine could be made out of centipedes.

'All right,' I said, 'take the animal to the doctor sahib but be careful you are not kicked out of the hospital.'

That evening, when changing for mess, I asked

him whether he got his money. 'No,' he replied sadly, 'no money.' And what had he done with the centipede? Oh, he had thrown it and the bottle into the river, which I suppose was the best place for them.

It is impossible while on the subject of objectionable and biting creatures to forget the tarantula spider; this is the most poisonous of the spiders and a bite from it is exceedingly painful. When it is fully extended, so to speak, it is about the size of a quarter of a dinner plate, but it has a habit of not extending itself flat, like most spiders. It generally sits about in corners with its legs drawn up under it, and when moving, it looks like a mouse and runs with great rapidity. When provoked it hardly looks like a mouse, but like the evil creature that it is. I once saw seven officers, one after the other, refuse to dislodge one which had run up into a corner of the tent; no one liked the idea of it falling upon him. More, I have seen a theatrical performance in the Punjab come to a full stop because a tarantula had run across the stage. This was an ambitious show with a chorus and full cast; but neither the chorus nor any of the leading ladies would go on the boards again. Next day the men performers pretended that the tarantula had been found and slain, so the show was repeated that night.

There are numerous biting and stinging insects in

India but I think I have referred to the most obnoxious of them. There are many insects which are merely alarming. The praying mantis, for instance, is not a pretty object in spite of the pleading attitude, with its hands folded as if in prayer, it adopts when disturbed; though it does not bite human beings, people should not mistake the meaning of those folded hands. They are folded not in prayer, but for boxing purposes, and at the end of those arms are pincers which bite and tear. I have known Europeans get their servants to remove a praying mantis that may have flown into the room, but that is far-fetched, for the praying mantis has one great object in life, to find a spider or tarantula and destroy it.

The troops in Mesopotamia used to make pets of the mantide; they kept them in biscuit tins and other receptacles for the same reason that in older days men kept fighting cocks. These insects were matched in the afternoon against jerry-mundlums, a quaint name that is merely the Tamil word for the tarantula and means yellow spider. The battles were followed eagerly, the two insects going for each other with a deadly ferocity. The tarantula used to spring and dart away, but before a battle was over it had always lost some of its limbs. The mantis always ate the tarantula if it won; if the mantis was slain the tarantula hobbled away leaving

the corpse on the field. I think that it was a man in the Highland Light Infantry who possessed the prize mantis, it always slew the tarantula. If someone were to get a film picture of a battle between a tarantula and a mantis he would certainly have a thriller, though it is rather a dreadful thing to watch. I must say my sympathies have always been with the mantis, both because it is an amusing insect with its pleading attitude, and because however greatly it is annoyed it cannot be induced to bite human beings. The Arabs say that it was certainly made by God to fight the tarantula.

Poisonous insects in India include ants. Numerous species are very hostile to mankind, and I do not know whether the tiny red ant or the big black tree ant is the more vicious. Ants have made picnics almost impossible in India. If you want a good picnic you have to send out men whose business it is first to clear the grass of ants and other insects and then lay out a big carpet, which again has to be brushed and swept before anything can be set upon it. Those who want to do things in style send out chairs and tables also; there is no squatting on the ground or lying about.

There is a yellow ant with a black head which is particularly anxious to taste of human flesh and likes it; it has wide pincers and (I think) a poison sac, and the bites which it makes often swell up and remain

painful for days. Most householders would agree that the red house-ant is the one that should be exterminated first. It appears suddenly in enormous multitudes from nowhere, swarms into every part of the house and gets into all the clothing and linen that is not securely sealed in tin boxes. It is a horrible thing to wake up at night and find an army of these creatures in possession of your bed and your clothes and wandering about in your hair, giving tiny bites from time to time. The only remedy is to get out and have a bath and then, if possible, get into clothes which the creatures have not yet penetrated. I found a great remedy for these red ants was paraffin or kerosene. It is generally possible to trace the hole or crevice from which they have entered a house, a trail of ants will be found running in and out of the hole and leading to the part where the main body is occupied in searching for food. Pour the kerosene down that hole and somehow the news that their retreat has been cut off is conveyed to the foraging ants in front. They forthwith disperse and the house knows them no more, till a fresh army arrives from some other hole or crevice.

Unpleasant things are so numerous in India that it would take volumes to describe or mention them. The unpleasantness they create is not always of a physical kind; what I mean is that the insects in question do not actually bite or sting, they are merely

horrible to look at and inspire distaste. One of the most unpleasant is a big flying earwig. This creature, apart from its nightmare head and tail-like pincers, carries a pair of vividly coloured wings which should be pleasing to look at but are not. The wings are only displayed when the creature is in flight, but sometimes when one is killed by somebody who does not know that it is quite harmless, the wing case opens and the colours are displayed. In Sikkim these earwigs reach an enormous size, and newcomers to hill towns such as Darjiling often get a shock when they perceive one seated at a dinner table or on a bed.

Then beetles are very annoying. Little gaily coloured beetles do not matter very much, but the big rhinoceros, stag, elephant, stone, goliath, and water beetles can be very annoying when they come droning into a room and hit you with a bump. They can scratch, too, in an extraordinary way, though I have never heard of even any of the bigger beetles using its pincers upon people. The great water beetle will sometimes come crashing into a room and end up with a bang on a window or a wall at the opposite end. I believe that these creatures cannot control their flight once they have started to fly; in other words, they have to hit something before they can stop. I have known a water beetle come humming like an aeroplane into a room



and upset a goblet of water which it hit; many of those present thought that somebody had thrown a stone. Later we heard it crawling about on the floor and realised what it was. In another case at a dinner-party those present actually thought that a bomb had been hurled into the room, so heavy was the thud with which the beetle struck the opposite wall. It is not very alarming to look at, having nothing massive in the way of horns or pincers, but it is so large that many are frightened at its size.

Another inconvenient insect is the green fly. It is very different from the green fly that infests the English plants. It is about twice as long and is marked by a black spot on each wing. The insect is particularly a nuisance in Calcutta; it generally appears shortly after the end of the rains and persists till late in November. When at its flood-tide, so to speak, the insect is so numerous that it drowns the ordinary oil lamp by falling into it. Electric lights are dimmed by the multitudes of these insects that fly round them. They circle round a light till they drop, and street lights often have them piled up at their base two and three feet high. I have been told that the big arc lights on the Howrah Bridge sometimes have piles of dead green flies four and five feet high at their base. The arrival of a flood of green flies means that every door and window in the house must be shut, whatever the heat, otherwise it would

be impossible to have a light. I have known green flies stream into a hall where dancing was in progress, and, within a few minutes almost, the floor had become so slippery with the insects that had been trodden underfoot that dancing had to be abandoned while the floor was swept; a process that had to be repeated three or four times during the night. Sometimes dinners have had to be abandoned altogether, because so many of these insects have fallen into the dishes and into plates.

A dodge that is sometimes tried, when the green fly is about, is to place a very bright white light at one corner of the room or veranda and then dine under a light covered with red cloth; but sometimes even that does not answer. Another device is to suspend a sheet under the light which will catch the insects when they drop exhausted from circling round the light. I remember once at a big public dinner the suspended sheets under the lights were answering very well, but one or two diners noticed with alarm that the number of insects falling into the hollow of the sheets was causing them to sag dangerously; then the worst happened, one of the fastenings broke and masses and masses of insects were deposited on the heads of the guests and on to the table. Worst of all, nearly every drink was ruined.

But let us leave dangerous and inconvenient

insects alone, and turn to something really enticing: the gigantic moths of the Himalayas. These are most mysterious creatures. The splendour of their markings and colours is beyond belief, and the splendour is toned down in such a way as to remove all idea of garishness. A tropical butterfly has beauty of a kind but no softness; it is like a well-dressed but empty-headed woman. The big moth on the other hand, is not only well-dressed but it conveys the same impression that a woman of an inner beauty of character does. The smaller moths are not particularly distinctive, but to look at some of the Himalayan big ones, the atlas, moon, swallow-tail and charcoal or saddleback, brings one up with a gasp, they are so amazingly beautiful. I remember once showing a man, who had never before seen one of these things, a moon moth which had emerged from a cocoon an hour or two before and was now sitting with outstretched wings on a window pane. The wings were quivering very slightly, and the motion they made just stirred the long down on the creature. The man was amazed, not knowing such beauty was possible, and he gazed at it for a long time, for the big moths, unlike the butterflies, are in no hurry to fly away after they emerge. Some will stay in the same spot, particularly if they are females, for a day or more.

Once, having the leisure then, I took up the hobby

of producing these moths, that is taking them through the caterpillar and chrysalis stage till they emerged full-blown. There are some entomologists who rear them from the egg stage, but that is a delicate and difficult business, for the eggs are hard to find, laid, as they are, high up on the leaves of bushy trees. But caterpillars are not so hard to discover. Supposing you are in India and want to see a charcoal moth unfold its beauties, look for a walnut tree, the leaves of which have been partly eaten by caterpillars. That is the first step only, for you are not going to find caterpillars crawling all over the tree. Of the caterpillars that have been hatched, only one or two per cent live to maturity. The others have been diligently searched for and eaten by birds. How to find the two or three that remain?

You must do one of the things that big-game hunters do. You must search for fresh droppings. In the case of the charcoal moth these would be found on the ground under some overhanging bough. They are about one-fifth of an inch long and cylindrical in shape. If they are black or blackish, search no more; they are old and the caterpillar responsible has moved away to another part of the tree. Fresh droppings are green in colour and soft to the touch; they are not offensive in any way and may be handled by the most fastidious persons.

Having found fresh droppings, the caterpillar with a little patience is certainly yours. You stand under the bough and search each twig inch by inch. As a rule the caterpillar feeds by night, so it will not be found crawling along the top of the leaves but will be clinging to some stem underneath. A mature charcoal caterpillar is nearly three inches long, green, fat and sluggish. It assimilates very closely to the colour of the underneath of the walnut leaves in order to avoid the keen and ruthless eyes of birds, but I do not remember any case in which, after having found fresh droppings, I have not found the caterpillar. Having spotted the creature, you must next break off the stem to which it is clinging. On no account must an attempt be made to shake the caterpillar off, for it may injure itself badly in the fall. Take the stem or twig with the caterpillar attached home with you, put them into a box of some kind and shut the lid.

Is that all? By no means. Next morning, when you open the box, you will find all the leaves eaten up and the twig bare. You must then provide more walnut leaves: no other leaves will do. Provide the leaves and clean the box out thoroughly. Give the creature an hour or two of sun and air, pierce a few holes in the box, and so go on from day to day, feeding, cleaning and airing. After a fortnight or so, a domesticated caterpillar, well fed and

kept for the most part in the darkness and comfort of a sheltered box, free from the blistering sun and rain, feels an urge to spin a cocoon and go to sleep inside it. One day you will find that when you attempt to take off the lid of the box in the morning it sticks. The caterpillar inside is spinning a cocoon. Leave the box alone for a day or even two days, if you can resist your curiosity. Then gradually prise the lid open. You will find, attached to a top corner, a green cocoon of the size of a hen's egg. Leave the open box and the cocoon on a window-sill or some other spot inside the room for a space of time which may extend to six weeks or two months or even more. Look at the cocoon at least twice a day. Then on one great occasion you will find a big hole in the cocoon and a blaze of glory and loveliness clinging to a window pane or to a wall.

But my intention is to dwell upon the mystery that the large moths conceal rather than upon their life history: the mystery of the very existence of these moths. What do they mean? What purpose do they serve? They wear a purple prouder than that of any Cæsar. But they only wear it in the dark. Sometimes a man, who in his arrogance dares to interfere with the schemes of Nature, is enabled to gaze upon those glorious robes, but for the most part they are only displayed to a few companions or

mates. The atlas or moon moth which has just emerged from the cocoon, stays for a few hours with outspread wings in the one spot. Then it is off, fluttering noiselessly into the wood. What is it making for, and what does it do? We know something of the life of the butterfly, how it flits from flower to flower, sipping nectar, how it folds its wings at night and sleeps clinging to the underside of a leaf. But what is the night life of the great moths? No job of theirs to fly into houses and lay eggs amongst the clothes and curtains. Nor do they haunt gardens or places where men dwell. The wilderness of the jungle is theirs, and very secret is the life they lead. Do they fly in the dark, drifting from tree to tree, or, having found some secluded spot, do they rest there, brooding upon their own glory, till death overtakes them? Is it the one purpose of the atlas to hide its glory from the world, in the same spirit that master-minds amongst humans sometimes retire into caves and deserts and are seen no more?

These great lepidoptera are to the insect world what great and amazing thoughts are in the world of human activity. They come from where we know not and are off again after having flushed the cheek for a bare minute. When we want to capture, and reproduce on paper, the thought that has illuminated and amazed the mind, we fail. A similar thought

may flush another cheek on another day, and perhaps for this once it is caught and retained. The man who can do that is a poet. Do you remember, reader, the theory put into a story by a poet that the greatest thoughts had an existence by themselves in the ether? There were some men who had the capacity of reaching up and catching these thoughts and putting them into words. Keats was such a man, and when he wrote the 'Eve of St. Agnes,' he was particularly in a mood to tune himself in with the ether, just as one tunes in with a radio set. What I would like to suggest is that the atlas and the moon moth and similar moths are great thoughts that have been materialised into winged but elusive forms.

Some years ago, when I was walking down a street in Bloomsbury opposite the British Museum, I saw exhibited in a case in a window in a shop a very fine specimen of the charcoal moth; the price marked on a strip of paper below the exhibit was two guineas. It struck me then that quite a lot of money could be made by either sending home these moths or actually breeding them from eggs in England; since nowadays the air mail has made it possible to send eggs swiftly to London, and with them could go leaves of the trees on which the caterpillar feeds. Sometimes when the eggs are hatched the little caterpillars will not feed on the



leaves of any tree except of the very tree on which they were laid. If I were starting business in moths I would certainly concentrate on the moon moth, which, though not so big as the atlas, is much more beautiful. I cannot conceive any entomologist who, once having seen a moon moth, does not crave to possess a specimen, just as one possesses other beautiful things merely to feast one's eyes upon.

There can be no question of cold killing the eggs, because in any case they come from the lower Himalayas, which are quite as cold in the winter as any part of England. The moths might even be liberated, provided that they were in the vicinity of the proper kind of tree, for walnuts and oaks are common enough. Of course some moths could not be expected to breed in England. There is a remarkably beautiful moth known as the green peach, the caterpillar of which feeds on a hard thorn not to be found in the British Isles, and there may be several others; but would it not be a fine thing if the big moths became common in England; what a surprise it would be for people in England to find an atlas moth fluttering against their windows before they had drawn the curtains.

Butterflies are very often exposed for sale in England. Many of them are rare Indian kinds; these certainly have to be caught in India. Some

belong to the Himalayas and the people who capture them are members of that quaint and careful race known as the Lepchas; these are real woodcraftsmen and can take a butterfly without injuring it. Other tribes in the Himalayas, when asked to net butterflies, do not seem to be able to distinguish between the rare kinds and the commoner species, and they do not care whether the insect is battered or not.

Outside the Himalayas, the Nilgiris are a great place for butterflies, and here there are to be found men who have been specially trained for the purpose of capturing and preserving, not only butterflies, but all kinds of strange insects. I met a man at Conoor, for instance, who had with him a collection of stick insects; these creatures have to be seen to be believed. One has to peer very closely to distinguish between them and dead twigs. The leaf insect is another surprising thing. The man had a collection of these also; one or two he had alive in a box; when I asked him how he was able to catch these things, because they are so difficult to see, he said: 'It is difficult.' Then he added, with a sidelong glance, 'Sahibs are very kind and even if they do not buy they always give me a "little something" for displaying what I have.'

But both the leaf insect and the stick insect have sharp mandibles, and I have no doubt they would inflict a nasty bite on anything that interfered with

them. As far as I can see they are not carnivorous but live on mosses, fungi, and other growths on the trunks of trees. It is said that both of them, like the mantis, devour the male when they are tired of them, but I have never been able to study these creatures and cannot say what their social habits are.

A creature about which something must be said, because of the strange and incredible sounds it makes in Indian jungles, is the cicada. There is no sound of the singing of birds in India; sometimes a twittering, and in some places a lark is heard high in the sky, but there is no song of the kind to be heard in an English wood. Though the birds of India may be beautiful, most of them make a raucous sound in the spring; at other times they are generally mute. But the crickets provide the cheerfulness that the birds cannot. Sometimes a whole hillside will be buzzing with sound; it is hardly singing, but it is cheerful. Innumerable crickets suddenly burst into hymns of praise. The sound is made by striking the hind legs against the wings, and the result is a sort of vibration not unlike that obtained by striking a tuning fork. I have known a whole hillside suddenly stop singing because a shadow has passed over, a fact I cannot explain except by the theory that hawks and crows prey on the cicada and the shadow may imply the passing of a bird. The cicada is so coloured that it simply merges into the bark of the tree on which it

is sitting. It needs keen eyes indeed to spot a cicada, even when it is singing and the sound is within a few feet.

Sometimes a traveller on a lonely hill will hear a low, sweet sound as of a bell tinkling on an altar. I have been deceived by this bell again and again; wondering whether there was a Tibetan monastery close by or whether a sheep with a bell had strayed far from its flock. Often have I discussed this far, sweet, lovely tinkling with travellers and sportsmen and with local peasants and others. None of them was able to tell me what caused this sound, and I was inclined to believe the mountaineer who told me that in his view the sound was actually that of a bell rung at an altar in a monastery and carried by some strange chance of an eddying wind to distant ears. Then suddenly illumination came; I found it in an article written by some unknown person in *Chambers's Journal*. The writer said that in Japan they sold in tiny cages crickets which made a noise like a tinkling bell. These crickets were kept in much the same way, and for the same reason, that canaries are kept, they provide the owners with music.

I remember I printed this story; shortly afterwards there came a letter from a man who travelled in the Lushai Hills; he said that on one occasion he tracked the sound to a certain tree. He climbed

up and got within a few feet of the sound and he was absolutely certain that an insect was making it. Putting out a hand cautiously to make a grab, something like a beetle suddenly flew up and passed him. Then there was a second letter from a man who was visiting those caves at Cherrapunji which I have mentioned before. He said that the singing and tinkling was quite clear in one cave ; he was not able to discover what was making the sound, but he was pretty certain that it was an insect of some kind. Then on one occasion I heard the sound proceeding from a palm tree which was growing under the window of a house I was living in. The sound was perfectly clear and distinct, and, although I could not see the insect that was making it, I was quite certain from the nature of the sound that it was made by a cricket of some species similar to the cicada. So I solved the mystery of the tinkling bell, at the expense of a lost illusion.

## SETTLERS IN INDIA

So far we have been considering India in the light of the Hindu consciousness of the peninsula as Mother, but obviously a book printed in English for English readers cannot overlook the kind of consciousness that English people living in India have of the great country. For the majority of people who come out to India from Europe, India is merely a place in which they reside for so many years. They have no consciousness beyond a very superficial one of the country, and many of the conclusions at which they arrive are necessarily wrong and prejudiced. A certain number of officials, and others, whose stay is from thirty to forty years, obtain a knowledge of the physical characteristics of the country and of the normal emotions and reactions of the people. But again, except in the case of a few, the knowledge so obtained does not extend to an understanding of religious beliefs or hopes or aspirations. Some of the books written by retired people are grotesque, both in their descriptions of and their comments on incidents of Indian life.

There was a class of people once in India nearer to the Indian than the average official or soldier could hope to be. These were the planters and European zemindars who in the opening years of the last century played a large part in the life of all that huge tract of land now known as the United Provinces, Behar and Orissa, and Bengal. These planters actually spent their lives in the country; many were born in it and died in it. Their descendants followed them in the occupation of the land, and sometimes the same family held the same estate for four or five generations. It is a strange fact that I can only think of one book in which an indigo planter, whether of a generation still alive or of one long since dead, has recorded his experiences. And this book was concerned chiefly with one side only of planting life, the sporting aspect, racing, and race weeks and sport in general. It contained references to the great old sportsmen of the writer's day, but there was nothing to show the kind of life that the planter lived when he was not racing or drinking that terrible toast, 'To the last man that died.'

At the same time it is not impossible to get a picture of those days. There are newspapers which can be looked up, and I personally know some people who have letters and documents, and whose memories extend so far that they can repeat what their grandfathers told them of what they had heard

from their grandfathers. Putting two and two together it is not difficult to get some impression of the lives lived by those early English who had come out to India, not as soldiers or administrators, but as actual settlers. It is quite possible that, had the indigo industry not met with disaster, there would have grown up in India an English population the interests of which would have been wholly Indian.

There are, I think, three distinct stages in the history of the indigo-planting industry and of the zemindaris connected with it. One of the old planters I have mentioned described these stages as the early stage, the 'Palmer' stage, and the last stage, which is the present. Now many of the first English to cultivate indigo and to own land in India were men of a bold and resolute character who had come out to India as adventurers with nothing more than a sword at their waists, or runaway sailors who had not even a sword. Sometimes a petty rajah or a large landowner, somewhere in the interior, would send an agent up to Calcutta to collect a few hard men who could be set to the task of exacting revenue from refractory tenants. These men would sometimes succeed so well that as a present they would be given a large grant of land. Others were given property as presents for services rendered in war, while a few bought from rajahs the right to levy revenue from a given group of villages. In any



case they were doing, in a small way, exactly what the Government was doing on a big scale: they recovered revenue. Very few would be actual owners of the land in the sense that ownership is understood in England. There is very little freehold in India: the land belongs to the Government or to the Ruling Prince. This Government ownership is not something that the English Government has imposed on the country. Any ruler is also in India the owner of practically all the land over which he rules. He leases out the land to individuals who are obliged to pay so much into the treasury every year; provided they pay that sum they are allowed to collect as much as they like, or as much as they can, from the actual tenantry, or from sub-agents in their territory. Nowadays, this crude system has been modified a good deal, but still it is the system on which the land revenue is obtained. The cultivator hardly ever owns the land he cultivates; he is permitted to cultivate it provided he pays so much. The early English planters should, I suppose, be considered in the light of sub-agents and would possess a good deal of power over the tenantry and would exercise it in various ways. The planters, if we may call them so, exercised their power in this way; they directed their tenantry to grow indigo and nothing else, and they took no actual rent for the land. What they wanted was indigo, not rupees.

It came about that in course of time a process grew up of not only not taking money from the cultivators but actually giving them small advances of money every spring in order to buy seed and keep themselves going till the crops were ready. These crops were then sold to the planters at a certain rate from which the rent the cultivators should have paid was deducted.

The profits from indigo were enormous, and the process of manufacturing it was not so elaborate that the owners of the factories were obliged to devote much time to it. The actual manufacture was left in the hands of Indian experts; there were clever clerks at hand and others to carry on the business of buying and selling. Generally speaking, the planter himself and his family had plenty of time on their hands, and in the early days the planters often lived a wild life. The factories were isolated, and each planter lived like a little king in his own plantation. His tenantry were also his subjects. In some cases the lives led by planters in those early days were lives of dissipation, but in the majority of instances the men who had come to occupy the land were of too virile and energetic a disposition to give way to idleness and debauchery. They were always doing something, and very often that something was connected with feuds as to the ownership of various plots of land. Every factory maintained

a small army of what were called lathials. These people were professional bullies and fighters. The lathi with which they were armed was not merely a bamboo stick, but a great hefty iron-bound stick with a big head studded with nails, designed to fracture any skull it came into contact with. But other people had their lathials too. So there was continual fighting and rioting up and down the land, which the courts were too feeble to interfere with. The planter held his own court and meted out a law which was his own will. To me it is a wonderful thing that this continual rioting between villagers, egged on by the planters, did not end in some kind of general disturbance, with the Government taking a part to restore order. But that never happened, and the fact is strong proof of the existence, even in the minds of these reckless and hard planters of the last century, of some kind of an instinct for sobriety of conduct. They never went too far.

The early planters, however, did not live in quite the same way as Indians in the same position did. Their outlook remained, after all, Western, and I think of them dealing with their tenantry in much the same way as the Norman barons, who had been given or had seized lands in England, did with theirs. They had their sports, shooting, hawking, though I do not think pig-sticking had arrived at the stage of an accepted sport in the earlier days. Cock-fighting,

too. A book dating back to the Moghal period refers to cock-fighting cocks and the best kinds of birds to rear for the sport, and the planters took the pastime very seriously, and every planter had his 'murghi-khana.' Another sport which was adopted from the Indians was that of wrestling; it was adopted in the sense that the rules followed were Indian rules. Every planter had his special 'pahlwans,' men trained in the art of wrestling. These people were matched against other 'pahlwans' from other factories, and the contests were attended by the whole countryside. Enormous bets were made on the result, and when the wrestling was over there was feasting for several days, not at the expense of the master of the loser, but of the owner of the factory at which the contest took place. Sometimes, of course, there was a row, and, as the tenantry would bet as recklessly as the masters of the pahlwans, the riots that ensued were of a serious nature. So far as I can see, when there was a dispute a committee of some kind was appointed by the planters themselves to look into the matter. Unfortunately, that committee was never appointed until after the riots had taken place. When it did report the decision was accepted and the bets duly paid.

Great wrestling-matches are still held all over India. Though planters may no longer have pahlwans in their service, many ruling princes pay their

wrestlers highly and take special care that they are well fed and looked after. The Indian system of training is very different from the English. In India the idea is to give the man as much weight as possible; in fact it seems to me that very often weight is preferred to muscle; the pahlwan being fed on weight-forming foods, sugar and starch and things of that kind. But it is a precarious life, because when a pahlwan has been matched for a big sum of money and he lets his master down, very often he is promptly dismissed, and the man who has been living on butter and honey is now reduced to scraps of dry bread and becomes a skeleton, to be pointed out in the bazar as the man who let such and such a rajah down.

Formerly it was the custom of various regiments to keep special sepoys to represent them at wrestling contests. Such men would be given a special allowance of fatty foods and would be envied by all the other men in the regiment because they would be excused most fatigues and parades. Some interfering Commander-in-Chief put an end to this practice, or rather tried to put an end to it, because I have heard of pahlwans maintained secretly by various regiments long after the Mutiny. Nowadays, of course, regiments have their athletes and footballers and people of that kind, but they are not placed in the special position that the pahlwans

had. I have read that in the early days various merchants in Calcutta had pahlwans in their service, but I think that the practice of keeping these men was discouraged finally by the heads of the more responsible firms, and any betting done on them had to be done on the sly. There are two or three Indian wrestlers alive to-day who have the same kind of following and reputation as the greatest of the film stars in Europe or America. Once, being in the city of Lahore, I found myself in the centre of a crowd of people all running in the same direction and crying, 'Gama, Gama !' I knew who this Gama was; he was a great wrestler who was not in the employ of any sponsor, but promoters of wrestling contests used to offer him great sums of money to take on this or that champion. He had overthrown them all, one by one, and at the time I mention he had arrived in Lahore fresh from a triumph over a giant maintained, I think, by Scindia. The crowd presently ceased to run because it came into contact with another crowd which had rushed in from other directions, and was now standing at the head of a street gazing at a house with a balcony in the far distance. Gama was showing himself, like a king, on the balcony. By the time I turned round to get out of the crowd I found the greatest difficulty in making my way owing to the pressure. It appeared as if the whole city had gathered to get a view of

the man. That Gama has been succeeded by two or three other wrestlers using his name.

Again I wander; let us get back to the indigo planters. It has been said that there are three stages in the history of indigo planting. The first bold and baron-like planters were succeeded by men of another type. Still hard and resolute but less inclined to behave in the old feudal way. These were better educated men, and the sports in which they indulged were of a more sober kind. They took less delight in battling with their peers, the lathials were displaced by people called piadas or footmen; they wore a kind of uniform and served in the houses as messengers and performed various services. The younger members of the planter's family were no longer allowed to run wild, but were sent to school. In India sending children to school means sending them to England for their education: only those English children stay in the land whose parents cannot afford to send them away. It does not matter so very much now, because there are many quite good schools for English children in the country, but in the older days such schools did not exist, and it was either England or nothing. At this time the planters married better. Having so much money they themselves went to England for their wives, and the presence of these ladies in the plantations naturally made for greater sobriety of conduct.

It was in the second stage of the industry that pig-sticking became the great sport, and with it followed other activities connected with horses. Racing, for instance. The planters were no longer content to inhabit bungalows; they built great mansions for themselves, palaces, of which the columns may still be seen standing upright in the midst of ruins covered with vegetation.

It was during this stage that the planters began that display of hospitality which made them famous. Guests were entertained by the hundred; there was a banquet every day at which costly wines were served. If the planters did not bring special cooks and chefs from Europe it is because every Indian is a chef and has an instinct for the preparation of delicious foods.

In the 'Palmer' stage a change took place in the method by which the indigo industry was financed. I have said already that the planters would give their tenants an advance of money every year with which to buy the seed for that year's crop. Presently the planters were themselves getting advances of money from private bankers, called 'agency houses,' in Calcutta. This money they would repay when the indigo for the year had been manufactured and sold. In fact the planter had no longer any worry about selling his indigo; the agency houses sold or auctioned it for him. There was nothing wrong with the system;



in fact it answered very well. The peasants were satisfied, so were the planters and the agency houses. Everything was, in the Indian phrase, 'right and good.' But it will be seen that a good deal depended on the methods employed by the agency houses. They held the planters in their hands. It was obvious that, if at any time they refused to lend money for the advances which were made in the spring, or were unable to pay for the indigo they had purchased from the planters, there would be trouble.

And there was trouble. One of the biggest of the agency houses smashed. The name of that house was Palmer & Company; hence the expression 'Palmer days.' It was quite clear in the enquiry that followed that nothing had been done by the firm which was not straightforward and above-board. It had lent money to certain noblemen in an Indian State believing that the State was behind the noblemen, but it was not. There were some hopes that the Government of India would interfere and get the money back, but the Government would not. And so ruin came to Indigo Land. It shows a certain fineness amongst the planters who had lost nearly everything, that they not only absolved the head of the firm from all blame, but actually contributed to form a pension fund for the old man who had lost everything through the failure.

And so we come to the third stage, which is also the present stage. Though many factories and individuals were ruined, indigo itself was not ruined; it still commanded a high price, and by degrees the planters began to recover their former prosperity, but they never went back to their former splendour. Things were done on a smaller scale. People were still able to speak of planting hospitality, but it was no longer a case of hundreds of guests at a time, but only of a dozen or two, and with the greater sobriety induced by smaller incomes there came a still further advance in the direction of placing the planters and their ways and methods into line with those of the other Europeans, particularly the Government servants, in the country. The children that had been sent to England to be educated had come back, and some of them stayed to help in the management of the factories on the estates, others entered the service of the Government. It seemed that in due course there would come into existence something like the planting aristocracy that existed in the Southern States of America just previous to the Civil War. But it was not to be; for a second disaster overtook the indigo industry. Somebody in Germany, busy with retorts and blow-pipes and pieces of coal, produced synthetic indigo.

At first the idea that a dye could be produced from coal was thought to be ridiculous, but presently

such dye was actually put on the market. Still the planters were not afraid, because the dye was of a poor quality and very expensive. But we need not go into the struggle between natural and synthetic indigo: the battle lasted for twenty or thirty years and then synthetic indigo won all along the line. There was a small revival during the Boer War and again during the late war, but it was nothing to speak of. To-day, if any indigo is manufactured in India the quantity is so small that it is not worth considering. Then what has happened to these great estates, plantations and mansions? As I have said, many of the mansions are in ruins. There is not a more pathetic sight in India than the spectacle of deserted factories and mansions seen in the heart of a jungle, by someone out on a shooting expedition or merely out sight-seeing in a new car which he has bought and which he is driving along some road which he thinks is a short cut.

Some estates have not gone to rack and ruin, but they are not producing indigo. The owners of a few get their tenants to grow sugar-cane; others grow tobacco; some families are living merely on the rent they draw from the tenantry. But scattered all over India are the descendants of those barons who once ruled it over large tracts of country in the indigo-growing part. These people have to find their living in some way or another, and some of

them have been fortunate enough to do very well for themselves; others have not been so fortunate. It is amazing sometimes to come across, in a country like India, a man or some widowed woman, obviously European, who is in such need as to have to appeal for assistance to some charitable institution. The name they give is often a name well known in certain parts of India. When asked they will reply that the name is indeed that of the man who was so famous in indigo days. It may be that a time will come again when these estates will be revived, but I do not think that those in control will have European names. A natural indigo may no longer be required, but sugar and tobacco will be, and India is the country where such products can be usefully grown.

But in what way have these generations of planters I have been referring to got nearer to the heart of India than any of the soldiers and administrators who have ruled and served in India? Well, I have noted that the planters have a much greater command of the language and a much greater knowledge of the peasants and their ways than any of the other classes of Europeans in the country. No one knows for certain about the old days of the indigo barons, but I do know that planters, whether ancient or modern, whom I have met, have shown an extraordinary sympathy with Indian ideas of the Mother. Perhaps

their occupations brought them closer to the land. If they did not hoe and till themselves they still had visions of muscular backs hoeing and tilling, they smelt the fresh upturned earth, and the varying seasons brought them a knowledge of how earth responds both to the touch of man and to the activities of Nature. Very often a soldier or a man at a desk misses altogether the most important aspects of Nature, and his work does not bring him into direct contact with the activities of the seasons. Therefore, unless he is a man of great imagination, he will fail to appreciate the depth of the feeling that the Hindu has for the very soil on which he treads. Sometimes, an officer in a Sepoy regiment will get a glimpse into the affection that the peasantry have for the soil, but it is only rarely, and I do not think that even that very gallant Lancer who is interesting himself in the religious beliefs of India has yet arrived at a correct understanding of what the actual labouring man feels about it. His friends are among the mystics, saints and ascetics of the land. He has still to learn what the bond-slave and the farmer think.

## THE GATE-WAYS INTO INDIA

When an Indian thinks of invaders in India his mind does not turn first to the European races. They have come by sea and one of them has stayed; but that one can hardly be called an invader, because his penetration into the country has been very slow. The invaders, to the Indian minds, are the mighty legions that have poured into India through the North-West Passes. The Aryans themselves came into India that way, but that episode in history is so remote as no longer to be present in the minds even of educated Indians: to them the invaders are Arabs, Mongols, Moghals, and Persians. Alexander the Great and his legions have been forgotten.

All these people poured into India through one of three or four Passes, the Khyber, the Tochi and the Bolan. Probably the bulk of them came through the Khyber; it offers the easiest approach into India, and most people think that through the Khyber will come any menace that the future might hold for India. All the might of India to-day, and for centuries past, has been gathered on that part of the

frontier which is approached through the Khyber Pass. It has been mentioned previously that the Afridis who hold one side of the Pass cannot live by agriculture alone. The same thing can be said of the Mohmands, who hold the opposite side of the Pass. Adjoining the Mohmands is a very ferocious and savage tribe known as the Mamunds, and behind the Mamunds are the Bonerwals and the Swatis and the Bagauris; on the other side of the Pass supporting the Afridis are the Orakzais, the next to them the large and warlike tribe, at one time known generally as the Waziris; they are now called Mahsud Wazirs and I think some of them are named in the books *Darwesh Khel Wazirs*; anyway, whatever they are called, both before, during, and since the war, they have given more trouble than all the other tribes put together. It is fortunate for the English that the tribes hate each other so much that it is very rarely they combine to test the strength of our Frontier defences. Of recent years the only combination that has really occurred was in 1897, and then, although the flame of revolt raged from the Malakhand Pass on the one side to the Tochi and Gomal on the other, at no time were all the tribes simultaneously in revolt. We were able to take them one after the other, but before the revolt was finished nearly half the army in India was mobilised to deal with it.

In the suppression of that revolt the severest

fighting was against the Orakzais and the Afridis. It was during the fighting against these people that that hazardous and dramatic action, known as the 'Crowning of the Dargai Heights,' took place and the Gordons won undying fame. The Dargai Neck was not a very difficult neck and on the day before the big action it had actually been taken without much difficulty. Later on, our troops were withdrawn and the neck was reoccupied by the enemy; so it had to be forced again. The second attempt was not so easy. Afridi riflemen had occupied a sort of steep, almost precipitous, part of the rise on the flank of the neck and from there drove back one assault after another. Three regiments were sent against the position and had recoiled before the hail of fire. Finally the Gordons were told to drive the Afridis off. It was said that before the Gordons were launched on the assault, they were collected in a hollow and addressed as follows by Colonel Matthias: 'Men, the General says yonder position must be taken at any cost. The Gordons will take it.' The Gordons took it and in the course of taking it occurred the famous incident in which Piper Findlater was concerned. Shot down and disabled, he played the sections past to the tune of 'Cock o' the North.' The story created widespread interest in England, and I well remember the telegram that was sent to the Gordons by the Lord Mayor of London:



'Bravo the Gordons. You have taken London by storm.'

But there is one redeeming feature of the Afridi. Unlike the Mohmand or the Wazir, he is a bright fellow always ready to laugh and joke, and he shows his teeth with a smile even when contemplating the basest treacheries. I think India will always have to beware of the Afridis. The Sikhs say so, and they are the people who know as much about keeping peace on the Border as we do. Their history is full of stories of fighting the tribes on the Peshawar Border; many of the forts we occupy were built by Sikhs. They are mud forts, the walls of which are of an amazing thickness and would resist any but the heaviest artillery; but the trouble with them is that they are always commanded by some mountain or height quite within reach of smaller guns: that is to say, shells can be dropped into the forts as stones from a cliff plopped into the sea.

The Wazirs have always been dangerous, too, but we have planted a garrison behind them also. An officer of the Razmak garrison once told me that he thought the Wazirs' desire for adventure was satisfied since we had built two motor roads across their country. It is the ambition of every Wazir of substance to own a motor-car, it is likewise the ambition of any Wazir to ride in a car. The consequence is that these tribesmen rush up and down the

roads at most furious speeds. Every car that starts on a journey in Waziristan is crowded to its utmost capacity inside and outside, there are always two or three men on the running-board and it is not unusual to see two or three men or boys seated on the radiator. Quite recently a section of the Wazirs has started on the war-path again. Fires on the frontier smoulder for generations.

Connected with the Khyber Pass in the minds of most people on the Frontier is the Kohat Pass, but it must not be supposed that this Pass leads into foreign territory. A long tongue of tribal country extends into British India in the vicinity of the Pass, and the Pass is a short cut from one part of British India into another. Afridis hold this Pass also, and they make money by keeping it safe for us. Not far from the top of the Pass exists a factory for the manufacture of arms which has long been a menace and a danger to that part of India. Why it was ever allowed to go up is a mystery. There are workmen in the factory who are capable of turning out Martini-Henry rifles and ammunition for them too. These rifles, though of a type which has been long since abandoned in the British Army and single loaders, not magazine, are still powerful and deadly weapons sighted accurately up to eighteen hundred yards. They fire black powder, their only handicap. In the hands of agile and keen-sighted

men they are almost as good for military purposes as modern magazine rifles, and indeed in one respect they are better, for they carry a much heavier bullet which naturally inflicts more dangerous wounds. I suppose the time will come when the Kohat Pass Afridis will be told that the manufacture of arms must cease. And yet there is this fact, that the Kohat Pass Afridis concerned have been very careful to keep the peace on their side of the border. There is, therefore, no occasion for taking action against them except the general charge that they supply arms to their neighbours who do not keep the peace.

A few years ago an historic ceremony took place at Jamrud, a fort at the foot of the Khyber. The occasion was the opening of the Khyber railway. Imagine this Pass as the route by which the most memorable invasions of India have come. The Pass is not merely, as most people think, a defile with high cliffs on each side, there are defiles, but the fiercest fighting in the Khyber has never taken place in a defile, at least not since firearms came into general use. The defiles are so steep that men occupying them cannot move about very easily, and when they do move can be seen from the opposite side. The convoys and caravans are attacked, not in the vicinity of the defiles, but in those parts where the ravine opens out and there are tumbled or rounded folds of ground.

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Fort Maude, which has been the scene of many a struggle, is planted in the part where the ascent begins from the plains of India. All round it are little hillocks which provide cover of an attractive kind for those who are laying ambuscades. In the middle of the Pass is the fort of Ali Masjid which, at one time, was supposed to be the key to the Pass; but certainly of recent years it has never been considered a key. During the second Afghan War, when it was thought that a decisive action would have to be fought at Ali Masjid before the Afghans were driven out of the fort, our cautious approach was found to have been unnecessary. When the British troops advanced the fort was empty except for one old woman left there to tell the troops what she thought of them. She did so very effectively, and there are many men whose most vivid memory of the capture of Ali Masjid is a picture of the old lady standing on a prominent ledge and giving expression to her feelings. Tommy, of course, laughed; but many sepoys said that she should not be allowed to use such words as she was spitting forth to fighting men.

I mentioned in the first chapter how I often visited the Frontier from Lahore when on leave or for week ends. I well remember my first visit to Peshawar. On the afternoon of the day I arrived I took my usual walk of investigation. The road I

followed was the road to Jamrud; on my way I passed a small post at which a guard turned out and presented arms, which was very gratifying. Further on, the road was very empty, in fact there was nobody on it; but beyond I could see the walls of the fort and the enticing hills behind it. It was a fine winter afternoon and I walked on and on. Presently a moving object appeared in the distance which in due course resolved itself into a tonga (a small vehicle rather like a pony trap) which contained two British officers. They pulled up when they came abreast of me, and one of them said: 'Hullo! Who are you and where may you be going to?'

I explained that I was merely a visitor from Peshawar out for a walk. 'Yes, but who are you?'

My answer, delivered I dare say with the importance of a taxpayer, was that I was a free and independent person and I was not going to reply to any more questions. One of the officers thereupon jumped out and insisted that I must go back with them since it was very dangerous to be outside the limits of Peshawar cantonment after dusk; and I could not be back in Peshawar before dusk unless I travelled with them. Anyway, I agreed to go back and the officers dropped me at my hotel.

Next morning, still wishing to go right into the Pass, and remembering what the officers had said

to me about not being out late, I hired a pony and rode forth in the same direction. This time, two guards turned out to salute me, one at the first post and one at Fort Jamrud. When I passed Fort Jamrud there was an Indian officer of some kind who shouted something to me, but I did not quite hear (perhaps I did not choose to hear?) what he said and I rode on. Again it was extraordinary how lonely the Pass was; not a soul in sight. However, I knew that somewhere on that road Fort Ali Masjid was, and my pony being young and willing I pushed him on hard and we got to Ali Masjid before mid-day.

The fort is planted on a hill which rises steeply out of the middle of the Pass. When I got to the fort itself on the top of the hill, I found the entrance to it was through an arch which opened into a sort of courtyard. There were two officers in the courtyard examining some saddlery and one of them motioned to a ragged individual who was standing by to take my pony. Then he came forward and said, 'Hullo, how did you come up? The Pass is not picketed to-day, didn't you know?'

I didn't know what he was talking about, and I said that I had just ridden up.

Then the other officer said: 'Why, this is the very fellow we picked up on the Jamrud road yesterday. What is he doing here, I should like to know?'

To this I replied: 'I have just come to look at the fort.' There was laughter from the two men and one said: 'To look at the fort! Good God, does he think it is a kind of Tower of London or some place that is on show to visitors?'

The other officer chimed in: 'I think it's very fishy. First we find him on the Jamrud road at an hour somewhat late for honest persons and now he has come here. I think we should have a little talk.'

I was not alarmed, but merely surprised, but the tone of the officers was a little more curt than I liked. We had that little talk and at the end of it the officers were finally satisfied about my good faith. But they said that I could not possibly see round the fort or anything else, and the best thing I could do was to ride back into Peshawar as soon as I could. They were not going to picket the road for my majesty, and I had better be quick, for if the word got abroad that a solitary horseman was riding down the Pass there might be a solitary rifleman waiting for him at some odd corner. Both officers regretted that it was necessary for me to go at once, or they would have given me some lunch. While this conversation was going on clouds were coming up the valley, and one of them could not resist pointing to them and saying with a certain satisfaction in his tone: 'I am afraid it is going to rain.' It did rain



before I got back, and I was thoroughly wet: not, on the whole, a successful outing.

Later on I was to see the Khyber in many aspects; and on one occasion, though in a different part of the Frontier, I had an opportunity of telling a supercilious tourist that Frontier forts were *not* open to inspection by visitors.

To return to that historic occasion of the opening of the Khyber railway. I noticed that the places of honour were reserved for Khyber Maliks. This word Maliks, which often means master or landlord, is used in the Khyber for men of position and money, generally big contractors. The Khyber Maliks provided a good deal of the labour for building the railway, and some have their names inscribed on the arches of the tunnels on the line. I noticed that these Maliks were not very well dressed when they took their seats. Very few were wearing the Pathan ceremonial dress with its embroidered waistcoat; they were in old, and in some cases very dirty, clothes. I remarked on this fact afterwards to an Afridi who was standing on the railway platform, probably a minor official. He said that white clothes to Afridis represented mourning; that was why these Maliks were not wearing clean clothes.

This impertinent reply settled it, I thought. The Maliks who had come in dirty garments had come

to show off their independence and to be rude to the Viceroy, who was to have been present but was unable at the last moment to come. I wonder if the high officials present also realised that the Maliks of the Khyber were deliberately offering an affront. If they did, nothing was said; the usual speeches were made and the railway was formally opened.

After the ceremony everybody got into a special train which proceeded up the Pass to Landi Kotal. It was in a way rather a wearisome journey, because the railroad cut through the cliffs which formed the most picturesque part of the defile, and the ascent up to the Kotal was made very slowly and cautiously. When we got to the Kotal I noticed another disturbing sign. Refreshments had been provided for various followers and servants of the Maliks, who had themselves been refreshed in a refreshment bar on the train; but these servants refused to accept the food and drink that the Government was offering them, and to make sure that no one else had them they tore the bread into pieces and flung the sweets out on the track and broke the bottles of fizzy lemonade. Again I wondered whether these actions were noticed by anyone of importance. However, nothing else unusual happened, and we all got back to Peshawar safely. Whatever the attitude of the Maliks and their servants, the villagers en route turned out well

to see the train pass. I noticed numbers of women and children. Although the Afridi women are not kept in absolute purdah they are directed to remain at home when strangers are about. On this occasion they defied their lords and masters. Two special trains, I think, came up the Pass, and all the carriages, or nearly all, had been newly decorated and painted. The villagers had possibly seen a construction train or two rumbling up and down the Pass, but here was something really lively and flashing. No wonder the Afridi women and children were pleased. They clapped their hands, and some sang songs. The men, too, laughed and showed their teeth, and seemed well pleased.

What had the Maliks to complain about? I was very curious but was unable to discover the truth. My forecast was that there would shortly be trouble on the railway, and that bridges and culverts would be torn up, but nothing of the kind happened. It was some years later that the railway was interrupted, but then the hand was not the hand of man but the hand of God. I still believe that trouble was brewing then, even though it never came to a head.

Before quitting the subject of the Khyber, I must mention the feeling which overcomes some people when visiting it. It is a feeling of being in a land which is not of this earth; a land not merely of

adventure, but something worse – a land of slaughter and terror. I marvel that the Afridis themselves are so happy. I once had an opportunity of crossing into Afghanistan as far as Dakka. If the Khyber had seemed a place of terror, the road to Dakka was overhung by something even more ominous, a feeling of brooding that I find impossible to describe. Evil seemed to creep out of the bushes and the hills. The time was the time of war – the third Afghan War – and although one could see our pickets on the heights, I and the officer with me in the car were alone in the valley below. There was always a chance of a bullet when rounding a corner; nothing happened to us; but evil has befallen many men in this place before and since.

Here is another Khyber incident. This was at a time when there was a little campaign going on against the Zakha Khel. I was going up in a tonga to Ali Masjid: the road as usual seemed to be empty. At one point my driver stopped and said: 'There are men coming down the road higher up.' We were well behind the fighting line, but it was not known whether other Afridi clans might not side with the Zakha Khel, and the chance was that the men coming down the road were unfriendly. The road was so winding that there would have been no point in trying to turn the tonga round and gallop madly back to the nearest fort. My Afridi

driver, however, rose to the occasion very quickly. 'Come, sahib,' he said, as he jumped out of the tonga and ran up the hillside. I followed him and we concealed ourselves behind a rock. Then the Afridi laughed and said: 'Now we will see what they will do.' That struck me as very clever; if the party was a small one we would catch it in an ambush, if it were a large one we could quietly slip away up the hillside. It happened that the party was not a hostile one; it consisted of a patrol of Indian cavalry. Safe in our hiding-place we were rather amused, watching what the sowars did when they first came in sight of the empty tonga and the horse standing alone on the road. Up went one arm to signify 'halt.' Then the sowars turned their horses about and disappeared round a corner. We waited for a while and then the driver spied a solitary trooper-creeping along dismounted on the hillside opposite us. We then thought it time to show ourselves, and went down, got into the tonga and drove on. When we passed the sowars they enquired why we had deserted the tonga, and the driver, strong in the knowledge that a sahib was seated by his side, replied that it was no business of theirs.

There is a Pass at the other end of the North-West Frontier, that is to say in Baluchistan, which might have at one time occupied the same position as the

Khyber, that is the Bolan Pass; from it there is a route to Candahar, but the Bolan Pass has lost its importance since the occupation of Quetta by the British, for Quetta is on the further side of the Pass. We are on the high plateau, and if any invading force comes down to India from that direction, as it was thought at one time the Russians would, it would find us entrenched in a very strong position indeed. As a matter of fact, Quetta is not only a defensive position but is a point from which a great offensive can be started if necessary. There is an easy route to Candahar from Quetta and it is said that we have, stored in Quetta, the materials for laying a railway with great speed to that Afghan city. The Afghans built a strong fort commanding the road to Candahar. During the third Afghan War this fort was assaulted by British troops and taken quite easily; so easily indeed that the Afghans in the locality refused to admit that they had really tried to defend it; they said that they had orders not to fight a battle. And why should not Afghans, when worsted, put out communiqués after the manner of discomfited Western generals?

## RULING PRINCES

Not every Rajah or Maharajah is a Ruling Prince. Indeed very few are. Rajah and Maharajah are titles frequently bestowed by the Government for much the same reason that titles are bestowed on people in England. They are given to men who deserve well of the Government, and these two are but a few of the honours and dignities that flow from the Government. This is the fact that people in England should bear in mind; the bulk of the Rajahs that they meet from India are simply men who have been ennobled for their own qualities or have inherited the title. They have inherited no powers of any kind. The two great Ruling Princes in India are the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Maharajah of Kashmir. The Nizam is the premier prince, though the Maharajah has territories slightly larger in extent. After these come the other great princes, several of whom hold sway over territories twice or three times as large as England.

We talk about enlightened princes, and the constitutional government this or that prince has

given to his people, but in India one always feels that the prince may, at any moment, go back to the older form of personal rule which is the constitutional form of government in India, and I think in the Indian States most of the residents accept that fact. Even in a State where there is a constitutional form, the ruler, whenever he wishes, rides across the constitution he has himself elaborated. In plain words a Rajah or Maharajah who has the right to rule, rules as he likes. His will is the law. If it pleases him to play about with a council or an assembly and such concessions, well, he can do so; though I suppose there are palace officials who are longing for the day when things are done without so much talk about them. But it would seem that I am about to plunge into politics in general; so I will leave the political aspect of rule in the Indian States alone.

India has, as indicated, a very large number of grades of nobility which run across the order of precedence as regulated by caste. All Rajahs, whether ruling or otherwise, are not Brahmans, though when a Rajah is a Brahman he is a very great man indeed. As a rule the Indian Princes claim Rajput descent. In fact I know of only one real prince who admits that he belongs to a caste lower than Rajput. Below the Rajahs are Thakurs, Talukdars, Bharétas, Mehtars and others, who hold



their lands under Rajahs or Maharajahs and who have a good deal of authority over the lives and property of their subjects.

British rule has complicated matters. Only certain defined rulers can direct a man to be put to death, though most can make his life a burden by putting him into prison; that is what I meant when I spoke of power over the lives of tenantry.

To show the kind of power that quite small under-chieftains may possess I will relate the following: I was once encamped in the territory of a tiny State; after the camp had been pitched a very polite Mussalman official came to me and said that the State would be very much obliged if I took good care that none of my servants or coolies slept that night with their feet pointing in the direction of Mecca. This was a Mussalman State and the idea, of course, was that to sleep with one's feet towards Mecca was an irreligious thing to do. 'What about myself?' I asked. 'You, sir,' replied the official, 'would of course know the correct thing to do and would naturally not break any rule that exists in this State.' Probably if I had broken the rule nothing would have been said, but I suppose the official would have taken it out of me one way or another.

Then again, I was in a large Hindu State when an official came to me with the complaint that although the eating of beef was strictly prohibited

news had been carried to him that on the previous night I had opened a tin of beef and eaten it. I apologised profusely, of course, but I think it was rather a try-on, because in the capital of the State European residents eat tinned beef without protest. They are not allowed fresh beef, by the way.

Once in Eastern Bengal I sent to the local shop for a tin of jam; the reply came back that the eating of jam by Europeans had been forbidden. I thought this a bit too steep, and I went to the shop and enquired who had given the order, because this place was in British territory. The reply was that Babu So-and-so had given the order. He was a well-known local landowner and was at that time very anti-British. I did not think it worth while pursuing the matter any further, for I was never one to trail my coat.

To go back for a moment to Indian titles. Besides the titles bestowed by the Government, dozens and dozens of honorary titles float about the country. Sometimes the dignity is assumed by the man himself without consulting anybody. At other times the title is given by 'common consent,' to use the quaint expression. Mr. Gandhi's Mahatma is a case in point. He does not like the title, but the mass of Indians insist on giving it to him. Annie Besant was often called a Mahatma; there are several explanations of the word, but it suffices to

say that it is applied to people who are supposed to have miraculous powers and to be in close touch with the Infinite.

Again, a prominent Hindu priest is often referred to as His Holiness, and there are several 'His Holinesses' in India. To show how far this giving of honorary titles to people extends, it is only necessary to mention the terms which are applied to the household of anybody in a position to keep servants. The lowest and meanest servant of all, the sweeper, is called mehtar, the washerman is called bharéta, a man's personal servant is styled sirdar. Sirdar is a word, I am told, that was brought into India by the Moghals. It originated in the high places of Asia and was applied to the body-servants of whoever the ruler or conqueror might have been. The sirdar's chief duty was to hand food and drink to his master. Naturally he would be considered a very important person. When the Moghal Emperors desired to ennoble a man they made him a sirdar. To-day in India the word sirdar, apart from being applied to the body-servant of any sahib, is often used in a general way about Indian officers in the Indian Army; but in Afghanistan it still remains a title of the highest rank possible.

When the Afghans desired to open negotiations for the conclusion of an armistice, during the last Afghan War, they sent several officers to our advance

positions, carrying a flag of truce. The officer in charge of the party was a captain or a colonel. Word was sent back to army headquarters reporting the arrival of this party. The British officer in charge of the post was then told to enquire about the status of the members of the party. Was there any sirdar amongst them? When the reply came in the negative the officer was told to send the party back, as an armistice could not be discussed except with people of the highest rank, sirdars. Finally seven or eight sirdars came down, though it took a week or so to collect them.

. Certain landowners in India are called sirdars. I am not quite certain whether the title has been officially bestowed on them or is merely a courtesy title. Once I had a great discussion with a peasant of whom I had enquired whether he would rather live under his sirdar or in British territory. His reply was that he preferred his sirdar because the latter took less out of him in the way of taxes. When I said that he was talking nonsense, he said: 'Here is my house, come and look at it.' He pushed open the door and allowed me to peep in. The hut was furnished with two or three beds, and there were brass utensils of various kinds lying on the hearth. 'There,' he said, 'if I had been in British territory I should have had no bed and these utensils would have been made of mud.'

'You are a very clever man,' I replied. 'You are an ordinary cultivator and yet own brass utensils. Do you not pay any taxes?'

'Oh, yes, I am down to pay very heavy taxes, but I don't pay them. That is why I like the sirdar.'

I made other enquiries and found that the sirdar had suddenly become aware of the fact that he was leading a dreadful life and had gone away on a pilgrimage, leaving orders that no taxes of any kind were to be collected during his absence. He had to visit the three sacred places in India, and go on foot, and it was expected that he would be four or five years on the journey. But I expect that cultivator had to pay up when the sirdar came back.

The land revenue business is most complicated. It is certainly true that the Government is very severe on those who do not pay their land revenue. There is a ruling known as the 'Sunset Law': that is to say, a definite day is named on which a landowner has to pay his tax. If it is not forthcoming on that last day his fields are put up to auction on that very day, as soon as the sun has set, and sometimes it happens that they are sold for a comparatively small sum. But that is only sometimes. As a rule the hunger for land is so great in India that there are always people ready to come forward and bid up to the value of the land.

Formerly, tenants in almost every part of India were liable to be turned out of their holdings at the will of the landlord. There has in late years been a great deal of legislation in all the provinces of India to give the tenants what are termed 'occupancy rights.' These mean, that after a man or a family have been occupying land for a certain period of years they have a right to remain in possession as long as they pay the rent. In Bengal there is what is called a 'Permanent Settlement.' This means that although, as in the rest of British India, all the land is the property of the Government, the landholder in Bengal will not be asked ever to pay more than a certain rent, fixed a hundred and fifty years ago. Land may increase in value, but the profit goes, not to the Government, the owner, but to the zemindar, the holder.

In Bengal land has increased enormously in value during the last hundred years; with the result that the landholders are all rich men. The Government may not take anything more from them, but they can take more from their tenants. There is a feeling amongst a certain political party in Bengal that this Permanent Settlement is a wicked thing and should be replaced by some arrangement which would enable the Government to take more and the landholder to take less. There is a great deal to be said on both sides, but I think those who want

to despoil the landowners are not thinking so much of doing good to the tenants as of a possible source of revenue to the Government, which they hope to be controlling in a short time.

In one of the small States in the Himalayas they have from time to time a temporary Rajah. When the real Rajah dies he is not succeeded immediately by the heir. A temporary ruler is set up for one year, and he has all the powers of a ruler. The country is his, the people are his, he can do what he likes with them. At the end of the year he is bundled out of the palace and the leading nobleman gives him a parting kick. Sometimes he is put on a horse in order that he may leave the country as quickly as possible. I am told that the man rarely succeeds in getting out of the State without being waylaid and robbed of any money or valuables that he might think he could get away with. In fact, he is generally glad to escape with his life. During his brief period of rule he probably made many enemies, and these are waiting, also, to get their own back. The State in which this extraordinary custom prevails is now very poor, because State treasures have never accumulated. Every temporary ruler does his best to dissipate during his reign whatever money there may be in the treasury. It should be stated that the man elected to be Rajah for a year is not selected by the people at large but

by court officials, who take good care to put in some creature of their own who would not seize power after having the reins put into his hands.

Mongolians have a genius for fantastic invention, and I would not be surprised to learn that this custom of a temporary ruler after the death of a real ruler originated in Tibet. Think of the position of the Dalai Lama ; this dignitary, who is the highest executive authority in the land, is elected by a clique of palace priests who pretend that they have found the child into whom the spirit of the Dalai Lama has entered. This child is made Dalai Lama. Until the latest Dalai Lama assumed that office, this child was regularly poisoned after he had reached the age of eleven. The last Dalai Lama was a boy of great gifts and great character, and possibly it suited one or two of the council to keep him alive; at any rate he did not die at the age of eleven. As he grew older he grew bolder and more resolute; and by the time he was a man he was so firm in physique that no court official dared to attempt to poison him. He lived a strange life: he was at war with the British; he made a wonderful flight into China across desperate country; he came back to Lhasa, was turned out again by the Chinese, and fled to the protection of the Indian Government. Again he returned to Lhasa, subdued a vast conspiracy against himself and, when he died, died peacefully.



At the moment of writing the Council of Regency are still pursuing the alleged arts by which they discover the child into whom the Dalai Lama's spirit had entered.

In one or two of the Himalayan States a dreadful ceremony used to take place every three or four years. When I first heard of this I was out with another man on a shikar trip; we were after musk deer and also hoped to get some sport shooting monal pheasants. On a certain afternoon we pitched camp just below the small Pass at a point where a spring gushed out of a hill. Across the valley were some cliffs with a dense undergrowth at the bottom. I thought the spot a good one to visit, but my shikari and coolies did not approve of it at all. First they made the excuse that there was no water on that hill. Looking through my glasses I not only saw water, but plenty of it. The men then bluntly said that they would rather not go and, when pressed, admitted that they were afraid of being captured and sacrificed by the people living on the hill opposite. I made very diligent enquiry and this story came out.

A man must be sacrificed when the crops are bad, and it happened that the cliff opposite was one of the places of sacrifice and the people in a village not far off were those who selected the sacrifice. They generally selected strangers. It happened that the

previous year had not been a good year for crops and, of course, my party were strangers. I said as a jest that possibly the villagers might select me, to which came the grave reply: 'No, sahib. Europeans have no influence with the gods. What would be the good of sacrificing them?' But my men were not keen to tell me the story until after I promised that we would not visit the cliff. Their reluctance overcome, they told me that the custom was to stretch a rope at a very sharp angle from the top of the cliff to the bottom. The man was then put on the rope with his hands and feet tied, and then slid down to the bottom. If he did not die when he hit the bottom, he was despatched with a sword by one of the crowd waiting there, and then there was a general struggle for pieces of his clothing, which were regarded as lucky. My men insisted that this ceremony was still carried out, but later on, when I mentioned it to an official who knew those hills very well, he said that the practice of human sacrifice had died out many years before. It was absolutely prohibited by State officials, and all that was done was to sacrifice a cock. That unfortunate bird was slid down the rope and despatched with a sword when it reached the bottom. The feathers were the lucky tokens for which the crowd fought.

But has it died out elsewhere? There was once shown to me, in a Bengali photographer's shop in

Calcutta, an amazing picture of the Pota-La in Lhasa. This tremendous building has one sheer wall on the entrance side about 90 or 100 feet in height and I suppose 50 or 60 feet broad. There are no windows on this bit, and the photograph showed that an enormous bit of tapestry or a carpet had been hung over it. From one corner of the wall to a projecting platform lower down a rope had been tied. On the rope was to be seen the figure of a man sliding down. I made very close enquiries from all kinds of people who might explain this picture, being mindful all the time of the story I had been told of the place of sacrifice in Garhwal. Finally I found a man who could tell me. He was a Tibetan and had actually been present when that picture was taken. He said that every ten or fifteen years the ceremony of riding the rope took place at Lhasa. As performed at the present time, the men who rode the rope were allowed to wear heavy gloves on their hands and rode on a saddle. The rope, too, had a slack at the bottom so when the men got there they did not get a severe bump. The riders were selected from a given village which had been informed in the previous year that it would have to supply three riders. The selected men then practised riding down ropes and balancing themselves as they slid along. Previously, my informant admitted, there were no saddles and the men had

their hands and feet tied. 'But these,' he added, 'are weaker days. We have not the strength of our fathers.' By strength, he meant cruelty, I suppose. Anyway, according to him, successive Dalai Lamas had gradually altered the ceremony, which was now no longer a solemn occasion but a mere festival. I believe the Dalai Lama was absent when this ceremony, of which I saw the photograph, took place, and I do not think another has taken place since.

Two Indian States, or rather States closely connected with India, are Nepal and Bhutan. Neither of them is well known to the European, for both are exclusive States and religiously keep Western visitors out of the country. It is true that there is a small residency in Nepal with two or three European officers, and sometimes a European expert is invited into the country to give advice on some subject or another. I have also heard of one or two officers of Gurkha regiments obtaining licences to shoot in a few valleys, but the greater part of the country is absolutely closed, and even the British Resident himself may not move more than a few miles outside the residency.

Lord Roberts was once invited to Nepal, but he was not taken into the capital by the ordinary route. They took him over devious paths presenting a lot of physical difficulties to travellers. The Nepali Government explained quite frankly that they were

not going to show so great a soldier an easy way to enter Nepal.

The executive authority of Nepal is not in the hands of the senior Maharajah ; he is called the Dharma Rajah, that is to say, the spiritual king, and he is supposed to be so high and great a man that he cannot be troubled with any executive obligations. There is a second Maharajah who is often called the Prime Minister: it is he who is really the ruler of the country. Nepal is unfortunately subject to revolutions, but the revolutions are never against the king. It is the Prime Minister who is dethroned. Recent revolutions have not resulted in much bloodshed, but in previous centuries there was always fierce fighting round the palace and many summary executions.

To the majority of English people Nepal is the home of the Gurkhas who supply such a fine and valiant body of men to the Indian Army. But it is not generally known that the rulers of Nepal are not Gurkhas. They are high-class Rajputs who originally came into the country from India. It is not often that we hear in history of a lowland race coming up into the hills and taking possession. I would like to hear the whole story of the Rajput conquest of Nepal. There must have been some wild fighting before the conquest was accomplished. Anyway, the Gurkhas are now very loyal to their

king and country. The Prime Minister is a great friend and ally of the British, and so strong is the tradition in Nepal of friendship with England that the Government of India looks confidently to Nepal to provide a reserve of man-power in case there is serious trouble in India from any foreign invader. This reserve was drawn upon during the war, when Gurkha battalions lent by the State were sent to garrison stations on the Pathan Frontier.

Some years ago, when the Prime Minister visited Calcutta, he brought down with him a Nepali escort which rather surprised people who were accustomed to think of Nepalis as a small race with Mongolian faces. This escort consisted of men as tall as British Grenadiers, and their faces were Aryan. They belonged to what was called the Kalibahadur Regiment, and were drawn from members of the ruling race, that is to say, Rajputs.

But even stranger than Nepal or any other country on the Indian borders is Bhutan. Till quite recently no Europeans had been allowed to enter it. Then, I think, a missionary entered (I do not know how he obtained permission). The next European, I believe, was Lord Ronaldshay, now Lord Zetland, who was then Governor of Bengal. The invitation that was extended to him was spontaneous, and of course the occasion was not one to

be missed. Two or three members of the Governor's staff accompanied him, and the visit caused the greatest excitement all along the Burma, Sikkim and Bengal frontier. I heard it very gravely discussed by Bhutanese and Tibetans and others. They said that the most elaborate preparations had been made to receive the distinguished visitor. After the party had entered Bhutan some Bhutanese and Tibetans told me that they had grave doubts as to whether the Governor would return. I said: 'What! Do you mean to say that they would keep him a prisoner?'

'No,' was the reply: 'but if you knew anything of Bhutanese regard for manners you would know well that they are likely to consider it very rude to make arrangements for the departure of a guest.'

I made some enquiries after this and found that it was quite true that, although it had been stated that the party would return by another route, no arrangements had been made for their passage. No supplies had been collected nor villagers warned. But somehow at the last moment the Bhutanese authorities agreed to adopt the queer European habit of hastening the departure of the guests, and so the party reached India again after traversing an unknown and remarkably romantic country.

These Bhutanese are quite different in physique

and appearance from any other of the races that inhabit the Himalayas. They wear tartans. The women wear shawls, and to see a party of Bhutanese striding down the road is to recall the passage of some bold border barons out on a raid. They wear short stabbing swords and I have seen one or two carrying shields.

Not so long ago Bhutan had five rulers instead of one, but I think there is only one now, and that may explain how a party of foreigners was permitted to enter the country. The present ruler is a young man of very great energy. I met him in Calcutta and was tremendously struck by the interest he showed in all kinds of modern machinery and novelties of any kind. There is no seclusion for women in Bhutan, and the ladies of the royal household are as free to move about as anybody else. In Nepal the female members of the royal families are kept in purdah. Wherever the Maharajah of Bhutan went, he was accompanied not only by his wife but by all kinds of odd female relatives of various ages, who took an equal interest with him in the working of machinery and the processes of manufacture.

There are two strange things about Bhutan. One is that it is the home of the Tangastani horse. In the earlier days of the European occupation of India, the Tangastani horse was often mentioned



as being the finest animal that any country had ever produced. On two occasions when the British came into conflict with Bhutan, the terms of subsequent treaties included an annual tribute of two Tangastani horses. That tribute was never paid, and I suppose the Government of India did not think it worth while worrying about the matter. One or two Tangastani horses, I think, were brought to a Colonel Holdich, of the survey of India. He has described them in an article he wrote as 'unequalled for strength and beauty.'

When Lord Ronaldshay was in Bhutan he asked to be shown a Tangastani. One such animal was brought to him. He has said that it was a very powerful animal, closely held by two or three grooms; it pranced about in front of him, but he was not given any opportunity of seeing anybody on its back, or what it could do when let out. The questions I asked obtained the reply that there was only one valley in Bhutan where the horse was found. There was a small herd there, more or less wild.

No one had recently attempted to domesticate the animal; possibly the one shown to Lord Ronaldshay was the only one in captivity. Anyway, all over India one hears praise of the Tangastani breed. Every man on the Burma, Assam and Bengal frontier who has a locally bred horse to sell says

that it has Tangastani blood. And certainly I have occasionally come across a country-bred horse of such amazing speed, endurance and strength that it seems to belong to some very special breed. A peculiarity of the horses of which I am speaking is their tendency to bolt whenever they come to a hill. They take it at full gallop, and the steeper the hill, the more violently do they exert themselves. That seems to be a sign of some kind of instinct for the hill. Big game animals in the Himalayas, when in flight, generally make for hill tops, or higher land, and the horses seem to have the same kind of instinct.

But apart from horses Bhutan has one peculiarity so strange that when I first heard of it I refused to believe it. Now I do. The peculiarity is one attached to the people and not to the country. In certain parts they think it immoral and irreligious to make a noise. Men are not allowed to discharge guns and rifles. If any shooting or killing has to be done it must be done with bows and arrows or swords. The hill custom of shouting across valleys is very strictly discouraged. A man who goes about singing songs at the top of his voice is considered a bad man and is shunned by his neighbours. There is singing and music, but only indoors and the jollity is very subdued. The explanation is that noise disturbs various spirits, some

of whom are of a beneficent kind. Why should these fine creatures be annoyed ?

Quite a large party of Bhutanese accompanied the British expedition to Lhasa. I saw these men every day. They carried spears and swords, but I do not remember seeing a single gun or rifle with them. When I asked them why they had no rifles they said, 'Oh, we have plenty at home, and some big cannons too,' thus implying that they would be quite ready to use them on me or any other inquisitive person.

Tourists in India, if they wish to see something of the Indian States, should not waste their time attempting to enter such places as Nepal or Bhutan. But they will get all the pictures they want in Rajputana. There, everything is old-world and feudal ; though in the heart of India, you may still see a man ploughing with a shield over his back and a sword girt on his thigh. If you look closely you will probably find that he has a firearm of some kind close by. The old days of raiding may have gone, but the tradition of it and the tradition of warfare are very much kept alive in Rajput-land. And it is in the Rajputana bazars that one will always find specimens of old armour and old arms ; real weapons, too - not made in Birmingham.

## ISLAM IN INDIA

The fire of religion burns more fiercely, I believe, amongst the Mussalmans in India than amongst Mussalmans in any other part of the world, except in the Holy Places. It has been mentioned before, that in India the Mussalmans do not speak of 'our country,' they say 'our religion,' 'our brotherhood,' 'Islam,' and so on. Their allegiance is not to any country, but to a religion; an idea that other races in India cannot understand. I think if they did grasp the fact that, to the Indian Mussalman, his religion was everything, there would be fewer of the riots and murders which break out so often. The Mussalman does not, I think, resent the presence in the country of people professing other religions. He is quite prepared to tolerate these religions provided that they do not cut across or interfere with any beliefs of his own.

I have heard people say that the music in front of mosques, from which many riots spring, is only an excuse for making trouble. But it is actually true that a Mussalman does feel that it is wrong

that his ears should be assailed by music when he is saying his prayers, by music or any other kind of noise. A man's whole heart and soul must be in his prayers; if his attention is diverted the efficacy of prayer is lost. I well remember the emotional way in which the Imam of a mosque spoke to me about an incident that had taken place that morning. A British regiment came marching past with the band playing in front. An officer, as soon as he saw the mosque, stopped the band. The Imam said that he could think of nothing which could have made the worshippers inside more grateful.

When Hindus pass the mosque playing music they annoy and irritate the worshippers within beyond measure, and it happens that mosques exist everywhere in big cities. It also happens that most Hindu ceremonies demand processions and processions with music. Elaborate rules have been drawn up by Government as to when and where Hindu processions may play music, but very often the procession is carried away, and they do not notice, or perhaps they are indifferent to, the presence of a mosque, and another riot is begun. In England the public only hears of riots when the casualties run into hundreds; but two or three score heads broken and three or four dead are not reported in the English newspapers. They take place frequently and leave behind very bitter feeling.

Another source of ill-feeling is the cow-killing question. Mussalmans eat beef, but the animal that provides this is sacred to the Hindus. I have already said that in some Hindu States the slaughtering of cattle for food is absolutely forbidden. But of course elsewhere the Hindus are offended on very many occasions by the sight of beef exposed for sale or of cattle being led to the slaughter-house. Luckily it happens that in remoter districts, where the police are few and authority cannot assert itself, Mussalmans are too poor to eat beef regularly. There is, however, one occasion when cows are slaughtered wholesale for religious purposes by Mussalmans: the occasion is a festival known as the Bakra Id. On that day, in memory of that sacrifice which Christians must also remember, the sacrifice offered up by Abraham, it is the duty of the head of every household to sacrifice one of certain animals. Very often the animal is a kid or a goat, but Mussalman tradition and custom assert that when people are too poor to sacrifice a goat seven of them can combine to buy a cow and sacrifice that instead. I have heard Hindus argue that the very name of the festival shows that cows could not be included in the sacrifice, because, they say, bakra means goat. Unfortunately for these sophists the word bakra is used in all Mussalman countries to refer to big animals, not only goats but camels.

I think there can be only one method of settling this question of music before mosques and the killing of cows. It will have to be done by somebody strong enough to see that any orders given are observed. Let Hindus refrain absolutely from playing music before mosques. Let Mussalmans give up eating beef and sacrificing cows. Each party would then be giving up something, but the result would be peace in a land which is now being torn to bits by internal dissension. India, whether free of European restraint or not, can never hope to attain any degree of stability while racial animosities of this severe kind still exist.

There is more reason why something should be done about such animosity because of the dreadful turn it has taken recently and to which reference has already been made. Ordinary rioting can be dealt with by the police and soldiers. There is room for intervention when crowds rush at each other with staves and clubs. It is the plotting of assassination which is so hard to cope with. I remember one Easter being called out with other members of the auxiliary forces to deal with Hindu-Moslem riots, and we patrolled the streets for five days in succession. When we were in the Moslem quarters the Moslems welcomed us. When we were in the Hindu quarters the Hindus welcomed us. Both sides wanted troops to keep the peace for

them. At certain points there were crowds. The crowds showed few obvious signs of hostility towards each other. There was always a no-man's land, a hundred yards or so, between them. We saw no swords, and yet we felt all the time that under-current of hate and animosity; but while we saw no swords, in other parts of the city, where there were no troops, men were being stabbed. Not one or two men, but dozens. In those five days seventy-two men were found in the streets stabbed to death. In every case murder had been committed in the same way. If a Hindu entered a Moslem quarter on some business or because his way lay through it, suddenly a man would dart out of a side street, stab him in the back and run away. In no instance did the people in the street make an attempt to stop the murderer; nor was there any case of anybody recognising the man. The police never found any evidence; nobody was prosecuted. The same thing would happen in a Hindu quarter. A harmless Moslem on his lawful business would suddenly be struck from behind and slain; and again there was never any evidence. The police never found anyone who had seen the actual murder or who could recognise the assailant. As a matter of fact everybody knew, in the quarter concerned, who had done the deed, but nobody would speak. Even the police really knew, but



they could not induce the witnesses to speak.

These murders are committed by two classes of people. One class consists of men in the employ of others, who are known as lathials, and the second class consists of men who act on their own and are known as gundas. The murders, during the riots I have mentioned, were probably committed by about half a dozen men, who would each have a dozen murders to his credit. It is possible that these trained assassins, who can strike the one blow which always ends in death, and who can always get away, do not number more than a few, and that they travel from city to city as soon as trouble begins.

The outbreak of assassinations first started in Calcutta. Later on it appeared in Lahore and Amritsar, thence it spread to Bombay, and cases have been heard of in Southern India, Bangalore and other places. I can quite believe the leaders of the Hindu and Mussalman communities when they say that they have nothing to do with this form of displaying animosity, but there are others below them who, even if they do not organise this form of crime, do nothing to discourage it.

However, it is just possible that in due course, even if enmity and animosity remain, the murders will cease; particularly as I believe they are committed by only a few men and not with the knowledge of a few individuals who come forward

as leaders in numbers whenever any difficulty arises.

But let us turn to something more pleasant. Though it is wrong to speak of caste in India amongst Mussalmans, Indians are divided into at least four great sections; apart from the Sunnis, and Shias, who represent two different forms of the Moslem faith, the chief sections are the Moghals, the Sheiks, the Sayeds and the Pathans. The Moghals, of course, are the descendants of the conquering armies that were so named. They have spread all over India. The Sheiks are of Arab descent, but it is strange to note that the bulk of them are not found on the frontiers closest to the Arab regions, but well away in the Ganges Delta, in Eastern Bengal and in parts of Southern India. Some historians will tell you that the Mussalmans in Eastern Bengal are really the descendants of converts made by the Moghals. A certain number in Eastern Bengal admit they are converts, but cannot explain how they came to style themselves, or came to be numbered with, the Sheiks. There are others in the same parts who claim that they are descended, not from Arab conquerors, but from Arab traders and sailors who used to come up the Bay of Bengal in the old days, and who took their ships high up the rivers of Eastern Bengal and the United Provinces. I would not like to venture

anything about the Sayeds and how they came to settle in India without being more sure of my facts, but I have been told by a Mussalman that they are of Persian origin. The Pathans, of course, everybody knows. They are the people who live across the North-West Frontier. Large numbers of them have settled in India. They are a fine, warlike lot, and those families that are domiciled in India provide the army with many troops.

The Moplahs are few in numbers, but are more fanatical in their profession of religion than any others of the Islamic brotherhood settled in India. They are certainly of Arab descent, and I do not know by what strange chance they come to have settled in parts of Southern India. They are an agricultural people, but instead of settling down to the ways of agriculture they are always ready to rebel against their landowners and the Government. The last time they did so they went further than they have ever gone, for they resorted to a very ancient practice, that of forcibly converting to Islam any Hindus that fell into their hands.

At one time it struck the Government that it might be possible to make use of the militant qualities of the Moplahs. Two Moplah battalions were raised, but it was found impossible to maintain any kind of discipline amongst them. I remember an officer of one of these battalions telling me that

every night officers going to the mess were stoned by the men lying in wait behind hedges and in ditches. He averred that this running the gauntlet every night was even more dangerous than taking part in a battle. The Moplahs are gamblers, too, and one of the troubles in the battalion was that when men had lost their money they were prepared to bet with their equipment and rifles. There is a story of a company appearing on battalion parade without their arms. They explained that there had been a big gamble the night before, and that the pay havildar had won, not only their money, but all their rifles. As a result of this rugged individualism the battalions had, finally, to be disbanded.

A certain number of Indian tribes have attached themselves to Islam. They practise Islamic rights and call themselves Mussalmans, but the orthodox Mussalman does not recognise them. That is not surprising, for some worship images, and others worship a great flag which is hoisted on ceremonial occasions. There are reports of the existence in India of a secret sect of Yezidis, who, while outwardly Mussalmans, are in reality devil-worshippers. There are Yezidis in Iraq, but they do not claim to be devil-worshippers; they keep enthroned the figure of a bird which they call a peacock, but it is nothing like a peacock, though it might pass for a representation of the common or barn-door fowl.

These Yezidis have been visited, from time to time, in their home in the hills and have been proved to be quite a harmless lot; but in such civilised places as Bagdad and Basra they are regarded with a great deal of dread, because they are supposed to be magicians who have obtained their powers owing to their friendliness with evil spirits. Further, they are alleged to be violently opposed to Islam. I once had a Yezidi brought into camp by an Armenian interpreter who said to me: 'Look at this man's feet. They are painted green because he wants to show his contempt for Islam. Bring now a book and he will show you what he thinks of the Koran.'

There was no other book handy except a copy of a ridiculous pamphlet entitled *Bayonet Training*. I gave the Yezidi that. He immediately uttered a string of vehement incantations and tore it into pieces which he ground underfoot. There are other Yezidis, or so-called Yezidis, who travel about Mesopotamia and other Arab lands, pretending to have magical powers. I saw one such man put his hand into a bag he had and produce several scorpions which he put into his mouth and ate. Several Arabs who saw this happen immediately pulled their jibbehs over their heads and cursed him, his ways, his parents, for half an hour.

Although it has nothing to do with the subject

under discussion, talking of Arabs cursing has led me to think of something which I saw in the Basra bazar. A party of Arabs had come in from the desert and were wandering about staring at things, when a beautiful Armenian girl appeared. Some of the desert Arabs stared at her, others sat down in the middle of the road, covered up their heads and cursed both her and the day they were born. On enquiring into this, I was told that the Arabs are afraid whenever they see a lovely woman that they are looking not upon a human being but upon Lillith. Lillith, you remember, was the first wife of Adam, but not a drop of her blood was human. Arabs think anybody seeing Lillith is doomed to misfortune for the rest of his life. I have enquired amongst Indian Mussalmans about Lillith, but those whom I asked do not seem to have heard about her.

A number of very strange religious mendicants enter India from the Persian borders. They sell charms and are invested, of course by the ignorant, with all kinds of miraculous powers. Indian Mussalman divines and preachers are strongly opposed to these men and continually inveigh against them both in private and public, for the Koran forbids the use of charms and incantations or any kind of traffic with the devil. But that does not prevent credulous villagers from buying their charms. In some cases they do not even give a charm; they

only mention where one may be found. I have heard a man say, 'Pick up the first stone you see, when you awake to-morrow morning; that stone will be your lucky stone. Be sure you take the first stone.' That is selling charms at rock-bottom prices.

## COUNTRY OR CONTINENT ?

Often have I wondered whether it would be possible for any European, no matter how long he had resided in the country, to sum up India and the Indians in the way, say, that certain Frenchmen have summed up England and the English, or as the Russians are continually summed up by foreign observers. The conclusion I have come to is that it is almost impossible to generalise accurately about India. I am reminded of something I once heard King Edward VII say. The occasion was the White City Exhibition in 1908. The King was making a tour of the exhibition, accompanied by the French President, I think it was Fallières. I had pushed myself into the front line of a long lane of people through which the King and the President were passing, and I distinctly heard the King utter these remarkable words: 'Too fatiguing ! Too fatiguing ! Merely a bird's-eye view.' The thought in my mind then was, that the President insisted on talking in English, perhaps in order to demonstrate his ease in the language. King Edward, with his ready courtesy, would fall in, doubtless, with the



President's whim, but, being aware that the latter's English was not very strong, would resort to that extraordinary habit English people have of speaking in a kind of baby English to foreigners; that is to say, they often leave out all verbs. What King Edward meant is quite obvious. He was getting tired, and had rushed through the exhibition so rapidly, that he had obtained no clear ideas about any of the exhibits.

Now I wonder whether it would be correct to dismiss India in the same way. A man may pass a lifetime in India and yet feel himself obliged to say, at the end of it, that the immensity and variety of Hindustan preclude his making any reliable generalisation about the country and its peoples. 'Too fatiguing ! Too fatiguing ! Merely a bird's-eye view.' Indians, too, might find the same difficulty. I have sometimes asked an Indian to sum up India, and only a highly educated man would even attempt an answer. Others would say, 'What shall I say ?' and spread out their hands with a gesture of hopelessness.

Once, travelling in Eastern Bengal on board a river steamer, I had some talk with a party of Indian constables who had been brought up from Behar to strengthen the police force. They were very curious about Eastern Bengal. What was happening ? Why had they been brought there ? The times

were troubled then in Eastern Bengal, very troubled; but these policemen from Behar had never heard of any agitation. And stranger still, they asked me whether the people of Eastern Bengal were Hindus or Moslems. To me, it is quite easy to distinguish individuals of the one community from those of the other by their general bearing and dress, but these Hindus from Behar apparently found it difficult. There is a proof that uneducated Indians cannot generalise about their own people if they cannot distinguish between one great section and another.

Another case. The subadar of a company in a Rajput regiment once disputed with me as to whether there could be any class of persons known as Mussalman Rajputs. 'Such a thing is impossible,' he said. 'How can a Rajput be a Mussalman?' When I said that, not only were there Mussalman Rajputs, but that they were enlisted into the army in whole companies, he smiled a deprecating smile and said no more, though he had to listen with politely concealed incredulity to my further remark that these men were enlisted under the term Rangar. Incidentally the Rangar war-cry is 'Rang-ho !' which means, 'Let there be blood !' The cry has been corrupted by certain people who do not know its origin into 'Bung-ho !' as a toast of health. The subadar mentioned above, by the way,

got a bit of a shock when he, together with me, was posted to a regiment which actually contained a company of Mussalman Rajputs. They did not call themselves Rangars but Dilliwalis; and they claimed to be the descendants of Rajputs who had been converted in Moghal times.

Some means of summing up India and the Indians may yet be found. Always at the back of my mind has been the idea that there is a real unity in India. I am very well aware that many keen and experienced observers who have written about India have said that India is not a country but a continent, and that it contains not one race but many races. Yet I have always been conscious that there is some kind of a thread which binds together all the provinces and all the races of which India is composed. Dashing about India in fast trains, in the course of a journey from one end to the other, one passes through provinces which contain populations differing from each other in respect of race, language, social customs and in a hundred other ways. Yet one never feels that one is out of India. Bengal is India, Behar is India, Agra and Oudh are India, the Punjab is India. Madras is as different from Bombay as Spain is from Russia, or Italy from Sweden. But the inhabitants of all these provinces are undoubtedly Indians.

India is, of course, a geographical entity.

Practically, she is as complete in herself as an island. There is water on the two sides of the triangle of which she is formed, and the third side is protected by the most immense mountain range in the world. And yet think of the geographical diversities within her boundaries. At once a picture arises in my mind. I was out wild-fowling in the Salt Water Lakes which are just outside Calcutta. We saw no wild-fowl that morning, but we saw the sun rise over a group of palms. All around us was sedge and marsh. Twenty or thirty yards away I caught a glimpse of a crocodile, and all of a sudden a vision came to me of the very beginning of life on earth. Here was exactly the kind of scene that a geologist or biologist might draw for the information of others. Land just beginning to appear, and on the edge of it the kind of animal that might at first have emerged from the sea and begun to walk unsteadily. Then suddenly, to complete the picture, there came poling along through the marsh a half-naked fisherman in a dug-out with a woman seated in the stern – the first man with his woman. The Salt Water Lakes, by the way, are stretches of water which have been filling up for centuries with sand brought down by the mighty rivers of Bengal. All that part of Bengal which centres round Calcutta and its tremendous activities was once sea. Where I stood, land was in the process of making.

Let us turn to something else. Benares claims to be the oldest city in the world. Possibly it is, because it is placed in a position on the Ganges which would induce even the most primitive of men to settle there. At any rate it has for centuries been the scene of the most extraordinary religious activity. All day long the priests are busy; gongs resound in the temples; the river is never empty of bathers; funeral pyres are never unlit, for the orthodox Hindu, if he has the means, should go to Benares to die; and the city is always thronged with multitudes of visitors who have come to worship at the spot. The tourist who strolls through the streets will be amazed at the throngs of people that press about him, all intent on some business of their own. To be in the middle of a street in Benares is like being in the middle of a football crowd just released and making for home. The sense of multitude and variety that one gets when in the heart of the city, curiously enough, is repeated when outside it and on the further side of the river. From the railway bridge, particularly when the sun is rising, one gets a glimpse of countless spires rising one behind the other like armies of spears. All these are Hindu shrines. Only a single mosque shows its dome, and the austerity of its lines serves to accentuate the variety of ornament on the Hindu temples. The shrines are built so closely together that they

immediately convey the impression of the intense life that surges all around them.

Benares, too, is as much a part of India as that sedge and marsh that I have already mentioned, and the devout people who live and move and worship amongst the shrines are as much Indians as the primitive, naked man poling his dug-out through the marsh, probably with no ideas at all about religion. The people of the Salt Water Lakes are so primitive that no Indian who has been out with me shooting duck has been able to give them a name or make himself understood by them.

Let us take a third scene. I have already mentioned those ramparts of peril and slaughter, the Khyber hills. There is a sense of war and peril in every yard of the Pass. Every rock, you feel, hides a man with a rifle. Behind that dark turn under the cliff there might be a dreadful ambushade. And, indeed, the Khyber is drenched with blood. Through that Pass have poured torrents of invaders battling their way. Not all have come to invade India. Armies have gone the other way, battling towards Afghanistan. On all these armies Afridis who inhabit the Pass have taken their toll. When there were no armies marching by, the Afridis took a toll either in money or blood from the caravans that passed through. I have been told that during Moghal days the Powindahs often refused to pay the

toll the Afridis demanded, and there were fierce battles before the caravans moved on. When, as a consequence of their exactions, the Afridis found no caravans venturing to cross the Pass, they fought among themselves. Those hills breathe of murder. All troops quartered in the Khyber will tell you that on their first arrival they have the sense of fatality that I have been writing about. The feeling passes after a time, but that is because men can accustom themselves to anything, even living with the ghosts of the slain.

But the Khyber, too, is India, though lying on its outermost border. The Afridis and Mohmands must be considered Indians, though some of them will deny it. Proof of this is to be found in the fact that I have seen Afridi Maliks embrace Hindus and whisper in their ears. The whisper probably concerned money, but the embrace implies a sense of kinship and fraternity. Also, outside India, the Border tribes are considered Indians. Afridis are not particularly devout, but one who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca told me that the Arabs always spoke of him as 'the Hindustanee.' But I could go on for ever multiplying proof both of the diversity and unity of India. Now I have reached the stage when I must proceed to denounce those who say that India cannot be spoken of as consisting of one country or one people. In spite of the vast

differences between the fisherman in the Sundarbans, the devout Hindu with the mark of Vishnu or Siva on his forehead and his centuries of religious experience, and the wild tribesman carrying his rifle at the trail, there is a certain kind of unity among the peoples and races in India – something that holds them together just in the same way as the seas on either side and the mountains to the north hold the country together and make all its provinces one. In spite of internal turmoils and divisions, India is no more several countries and its people no more several races than an individual man is several men.

In fact, when thinking of India, it can justly be compared with a man with many sides to his character. Or, if we think of India as Mother India, we must also think of her as a woman with many emotions and feelings which are expressed in a spontaneous and not in the artificial way of those who have been brought up on what in Europe would be styled 'conventional' lines. Mother India is simple, natural and unaffected, notwithstanding the variety of her emotions, which are often expressed in ways likely to create in some observers the impression that they have been in the presence, not of one woman but of many. And note this, psychologists in these days recognise the presence in the one individual of several personalities. The diversities and differences I have been referring to



may be merely varying expressions of the one personality. India is a kind of Eastern Lady Liza – inscrutable. Someone may be able to read her face yet. In the meanwhile let us return to the contrast which India offers to Europe. What follows may appear to be light and trifling, but it will serve to illustrate the difference in the life of the Briton in India as compared with his life in his own country.

An Englishman in the employ of a great corporation in Calcutta said one day in a club that one morning when he was shaving it struck him that the life he was leading was very similar to what he had been leading before he came out to India. He got up at the same hour, ate the same kind of breakfast, dashed off to the office, where he worked at the same tasks, and came back to very much the same kind of home. On Sundays he lounged about the house and took exercise out of doors. This was a Sunday, and he was looking forward to a game of golf in the country in the afternoon. He was thinking in this strain when, looking out of the window, his eyes fell upon a coco-nut palm in his garden, and he noticed that one of the big fronds had withered and was about to drop. As there were children in the house, he thought he should have the frond lopped off before it dropped on somebody's head. 'That palm is not very English,' he thought to himself. After breakfast he sent for his

mali and told him to shin up the tree and cut off the frond. The gardener was an Uriya, and to his employer's surprise said it was against his caste to climb a tree. 'Moreover,' he added, 'there is a green snake living in the tree, and it is very poisonous.'

'Well, then,' said the master, 'fetch me somebody who will cut off that withered frond.'

The man went off and presently returned with a Santhal coolie, who said he was prepared to climb any tree – it was his business to dock palm trees. 'But remember,' said the mali to him, 'a green snake lives in that tree.'

The Santhal was alarmed, and thereupon swore that he would not go up the tree. And he went away.

'Sahib,' said the mali, 'will you give me a rupee if I go up? I can pay a Brahman a few pice and so make it all right about my caste.'

The sahib agreed, and the man climbed the tree, using his toes as a monkey would to get a grip on the surface. Whilst he was going up, a small group of servants collected in the garden to watch the ascent. When the high fronds were reached he produced a knife from his waist-band, and proceeded to lop off, not only the withered frond but several others. It was while he was doing this that one of the servants called out: 'The snake! Look at the snake!' And there, true enough, was a long

green snake, working its way slowly down the trunk. When still about seven or eight feet above the ground, it seemed to leap off and disappear into some bushes. The sahib immediately called the mali down, and, because, as I have said, there were children in the house, he organised a beat amongst the bushes for that snake. This lasted for some time, but no snake was found.

Some hours later at lunch, the butler said: 'Sir, the snake has gone back to the tree. We have seen it.' But the owner decided to leave the snake in the tree, for the reason that while up there it was only dangerous to sparrows.

While listening to this story, another man present said: 'That's extraordinary! It was only this morning that I, too, was thinking what a similarity there is between life at home and life in India. I was out riding, and was cantering down a lane beyond Alipore, and really I might have been cantering along an empty lane in Devon. There was no one about, and the trees and foliage did not strike me as particularly tropical. Then I turned a corner and entered the high road. Near me was a big banyan tree - very tropical. Under it were seated five or six cultivators and a bear-leader with a big brown bear. The bear was fast asleep in a half-begging position, his back against the tree and his forepaws in the air. My mare did not like that

bear, and so I gently brought her up to have a smell at it. When a foot or two away from the bear the mare stuck her feet in the ground and stretched her neck out towards the animal. Then she uttered a terrific snort. I can imagine her showing her teeth, dilating her nostrils, and staring with blazing eyes. The snort awoke the bear, and when it saw my mare's distorted features so close to it, it fell over on its side in alarm. The fall and the expression on the bear's face were so ludicrous that I burst out laughing. So did the cultivators. And so also did the owner of the bear. Now I ask you, could such a happy incident ever occur to anybody riding in the lanes of Devonshire?

And there I must leave it. India is like a wide sea, difficult to apprehend despite its pervasive influence on men's minds. The small catches, dragged up in a hand-net from the great waters that I have described in these pages will, I hope, reflect a little of the variety and fascination that India has held from the time of the venturous early travellers up to the present day.